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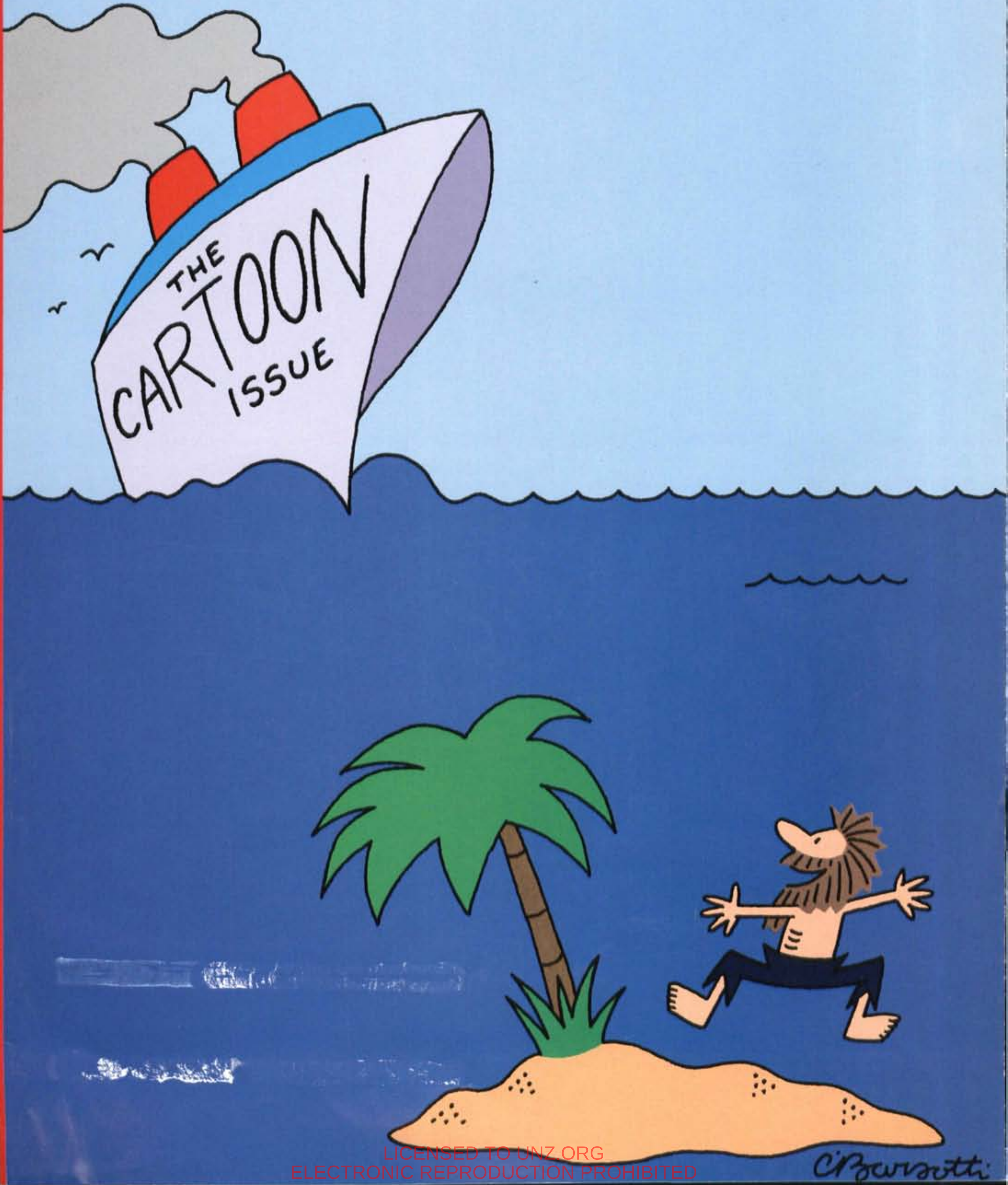
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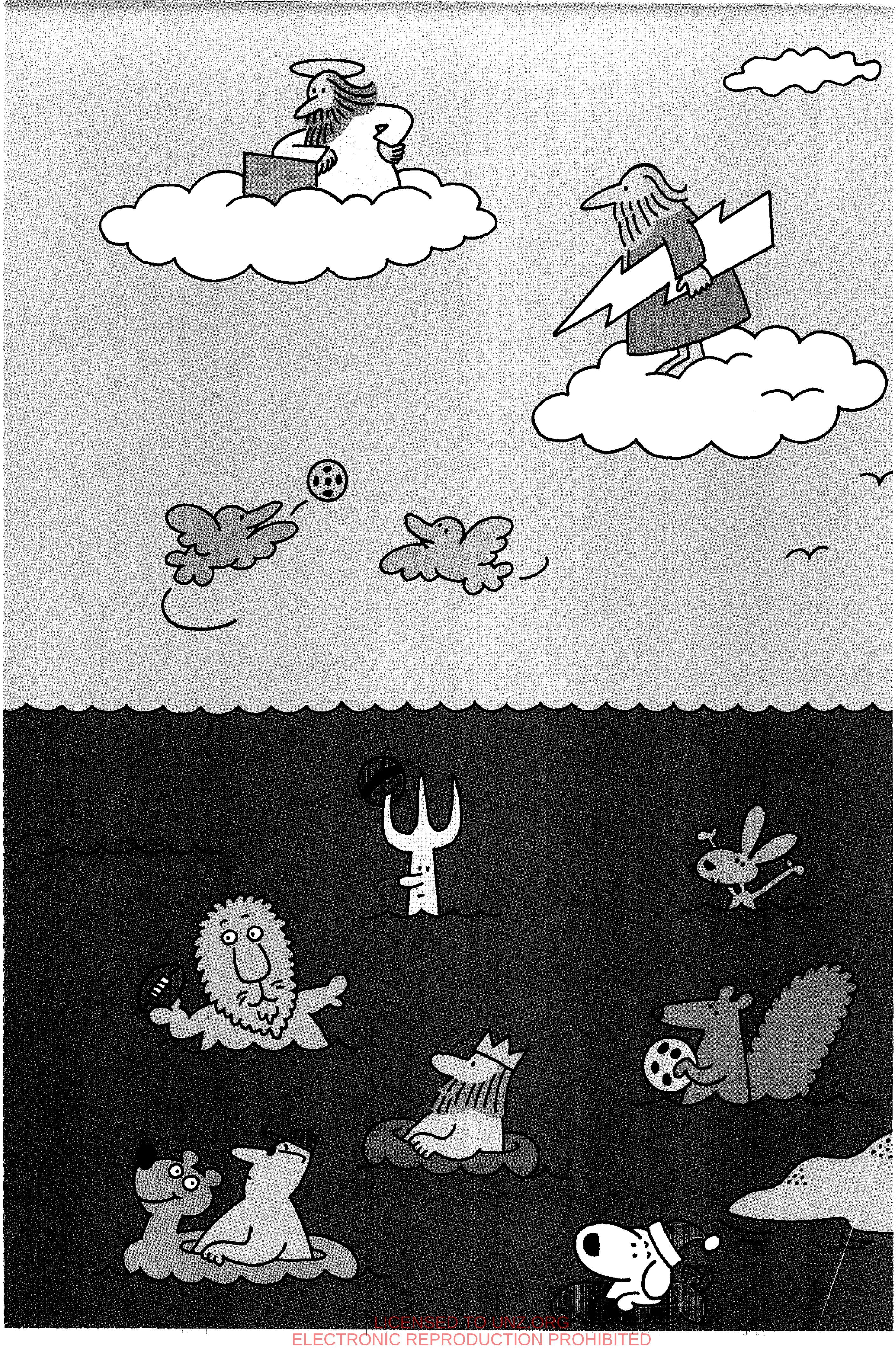

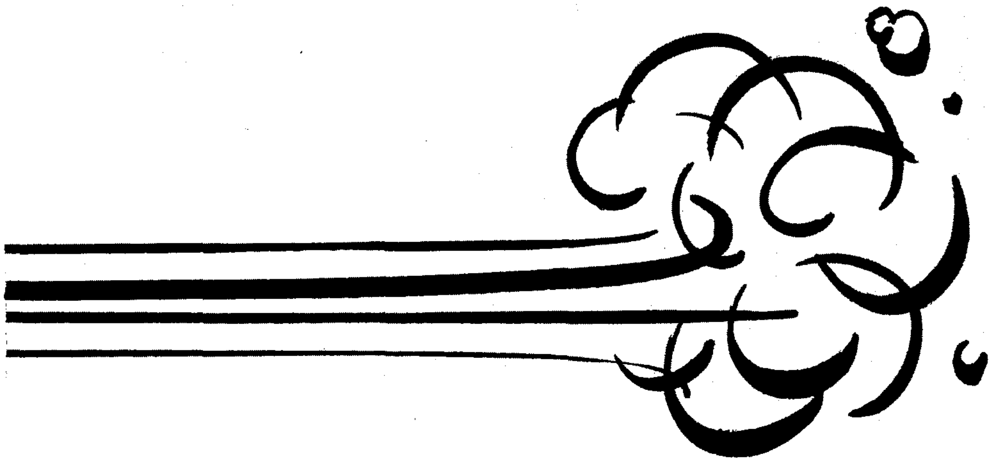

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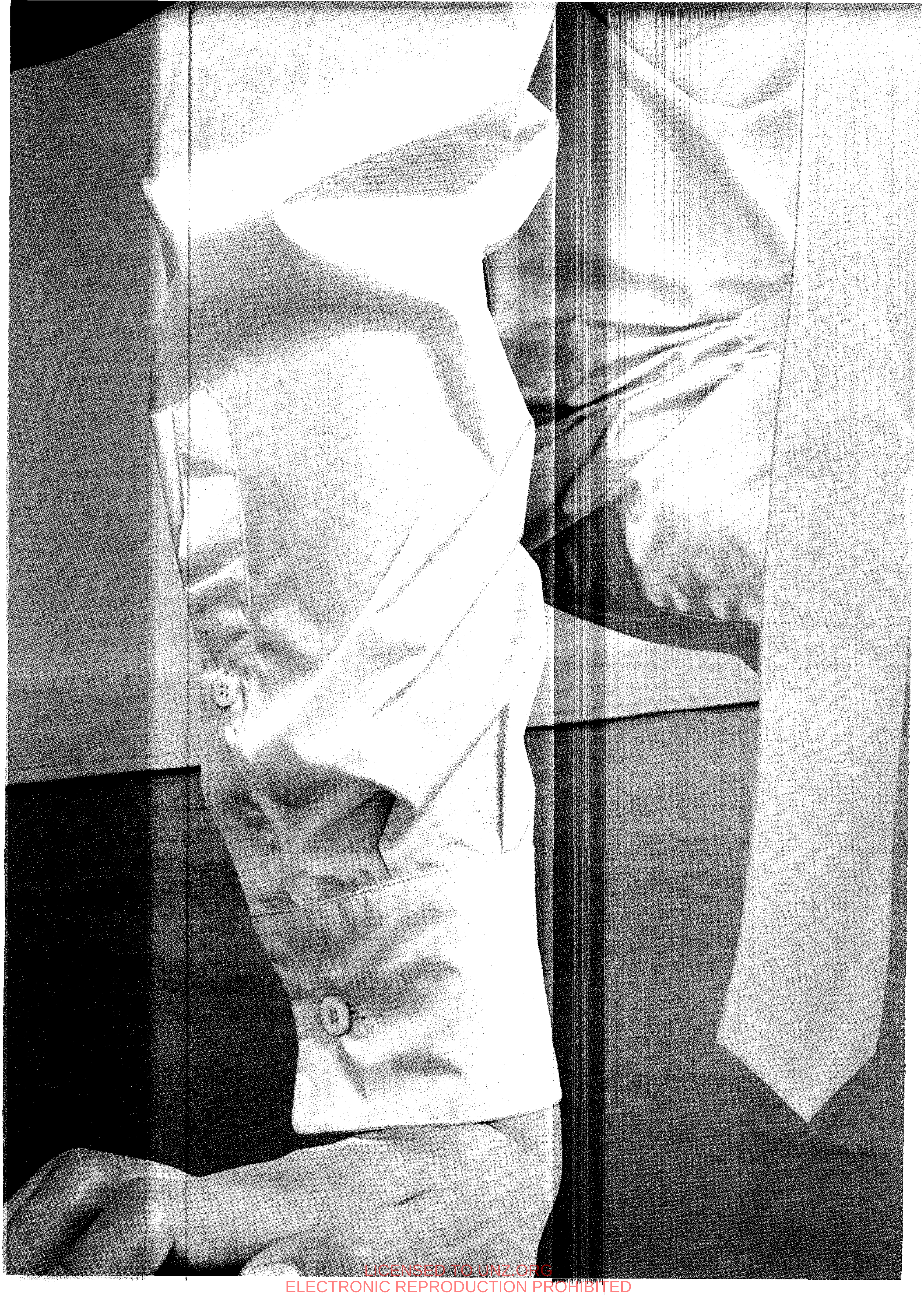

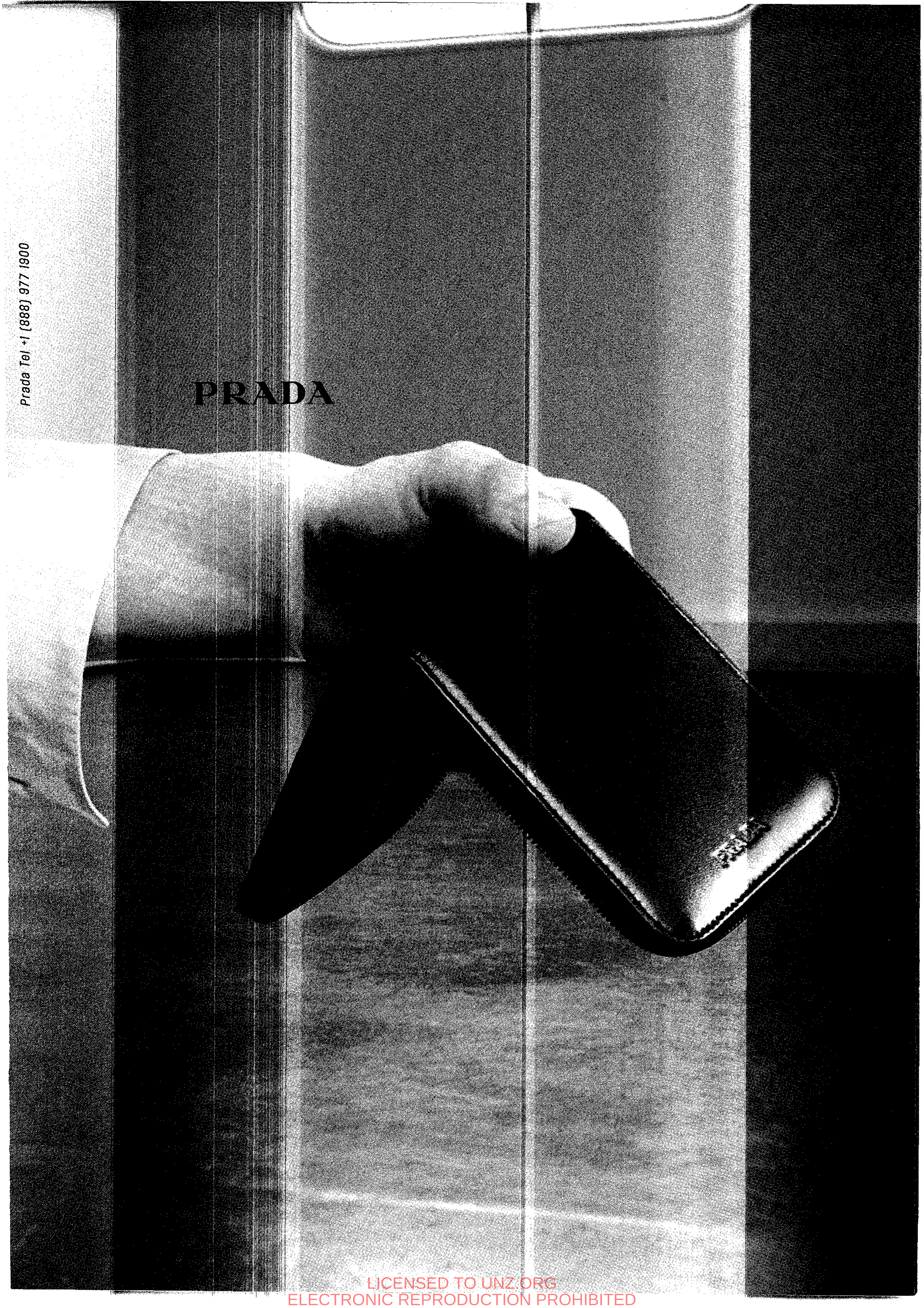
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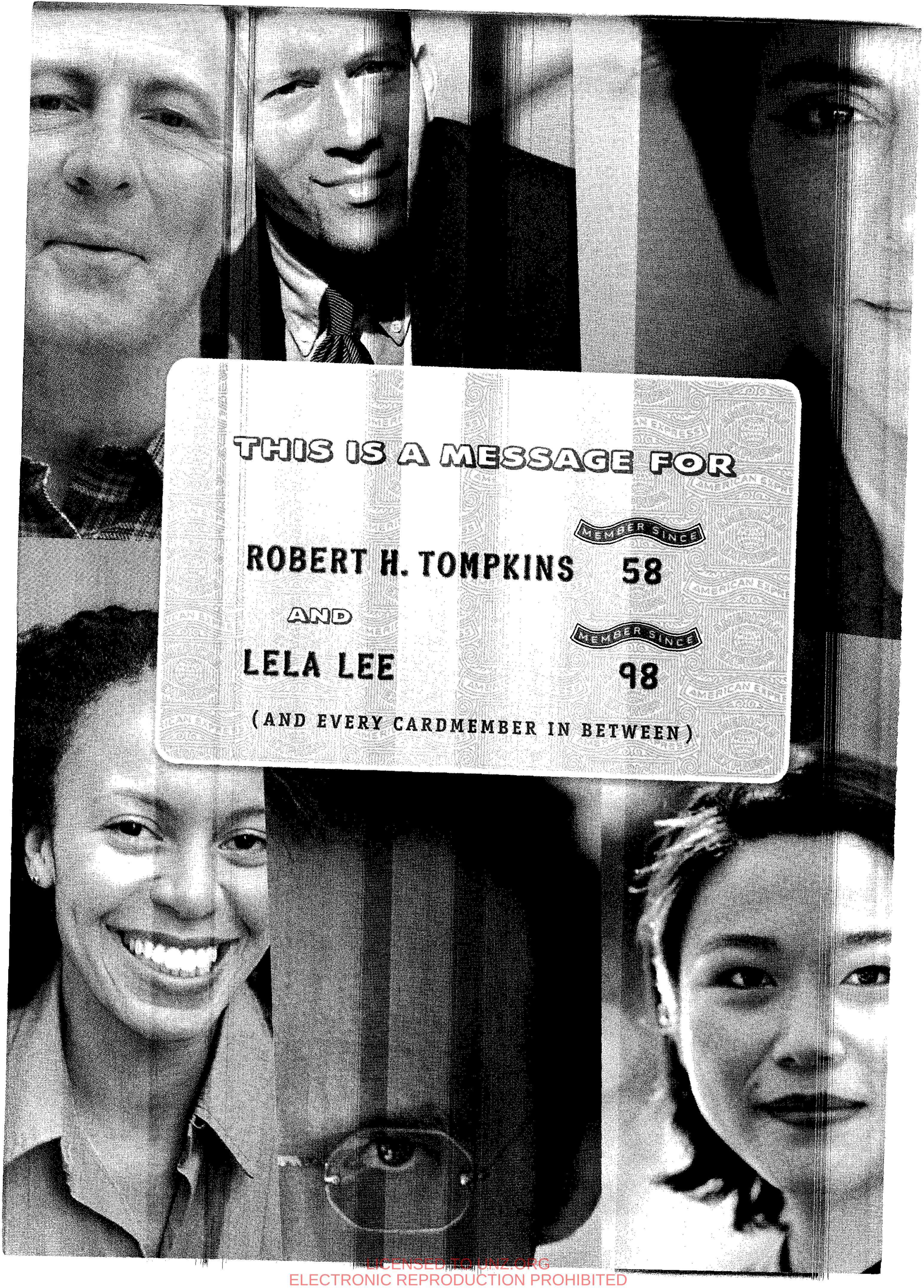
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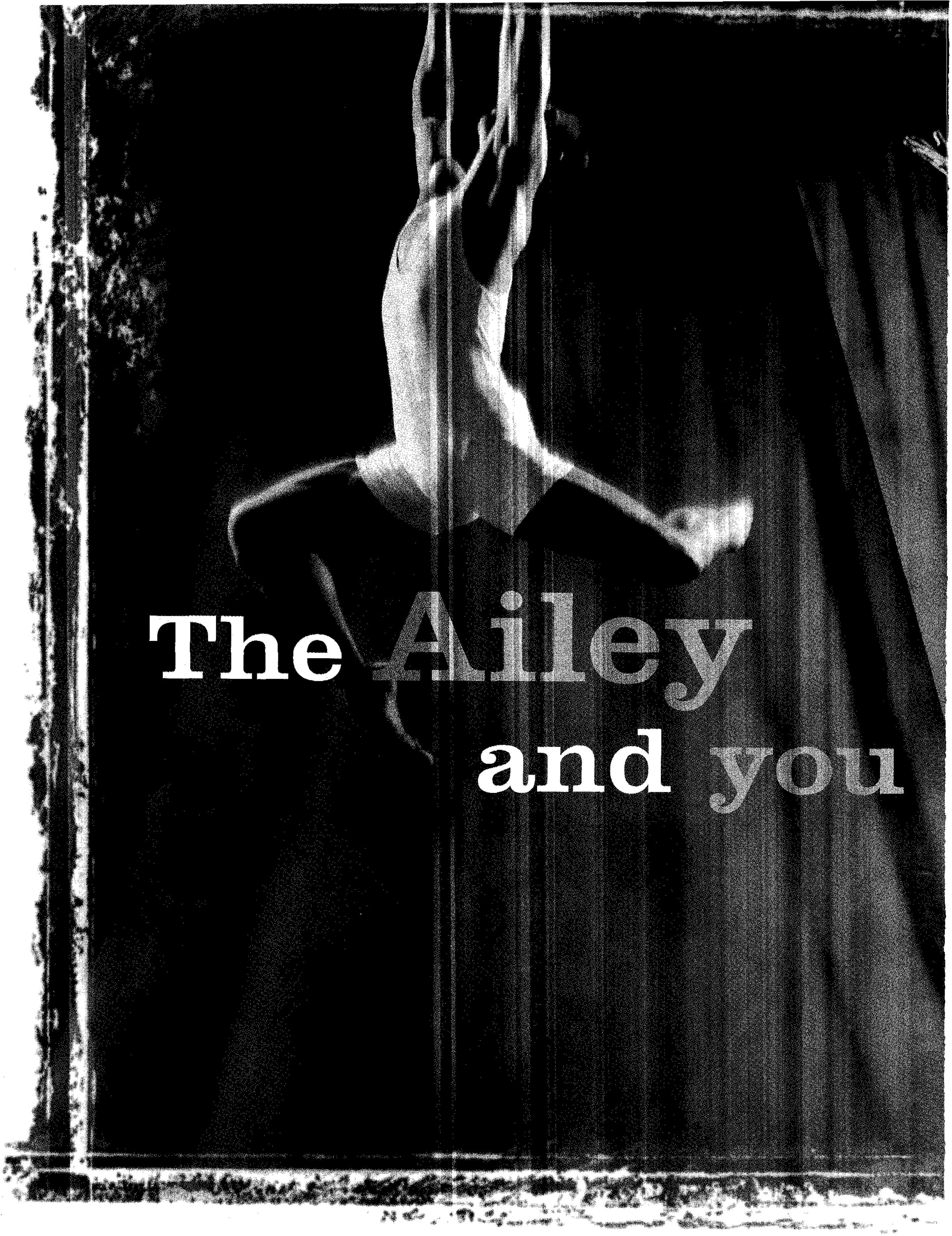
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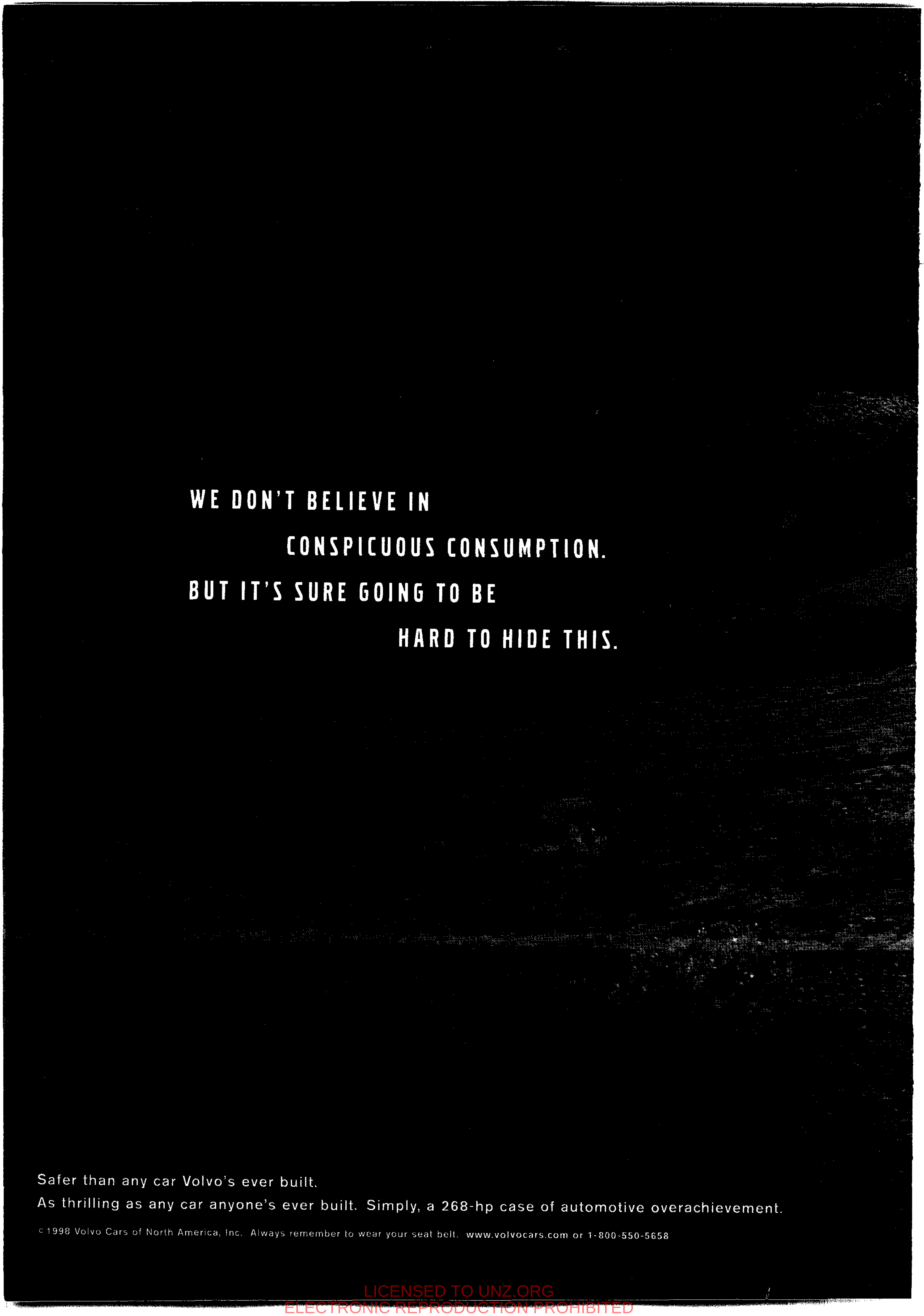
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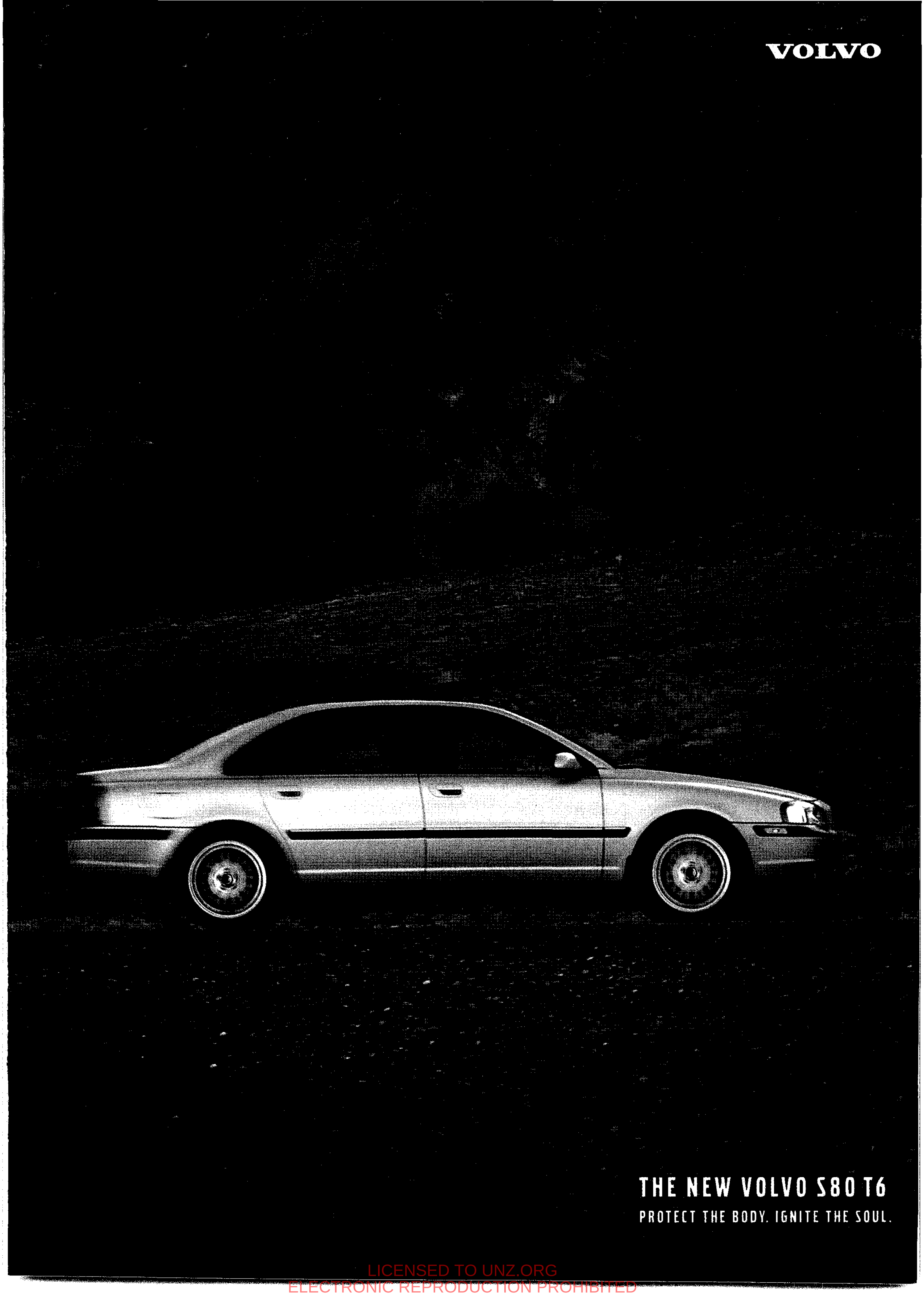
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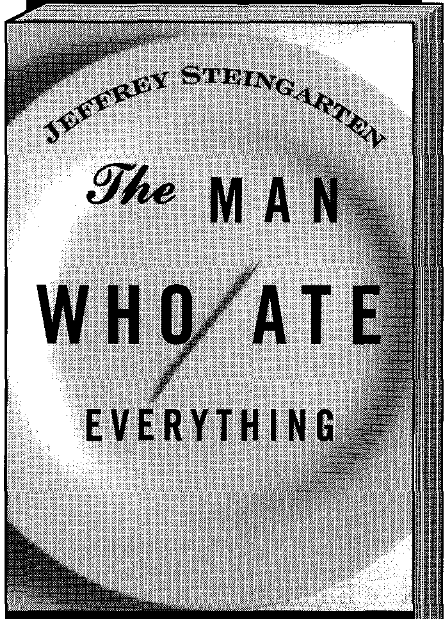

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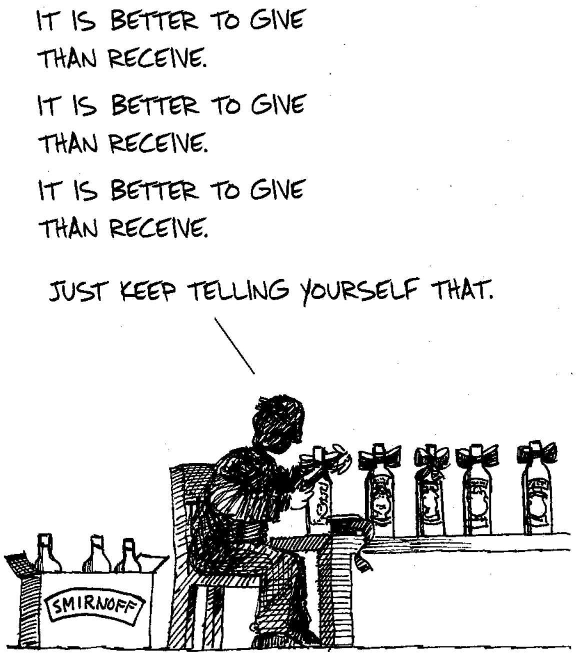
CHARLES BARSOTTI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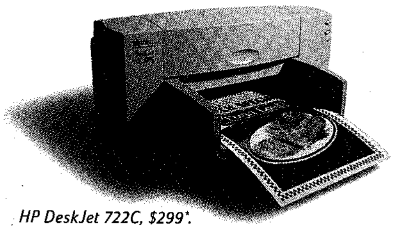

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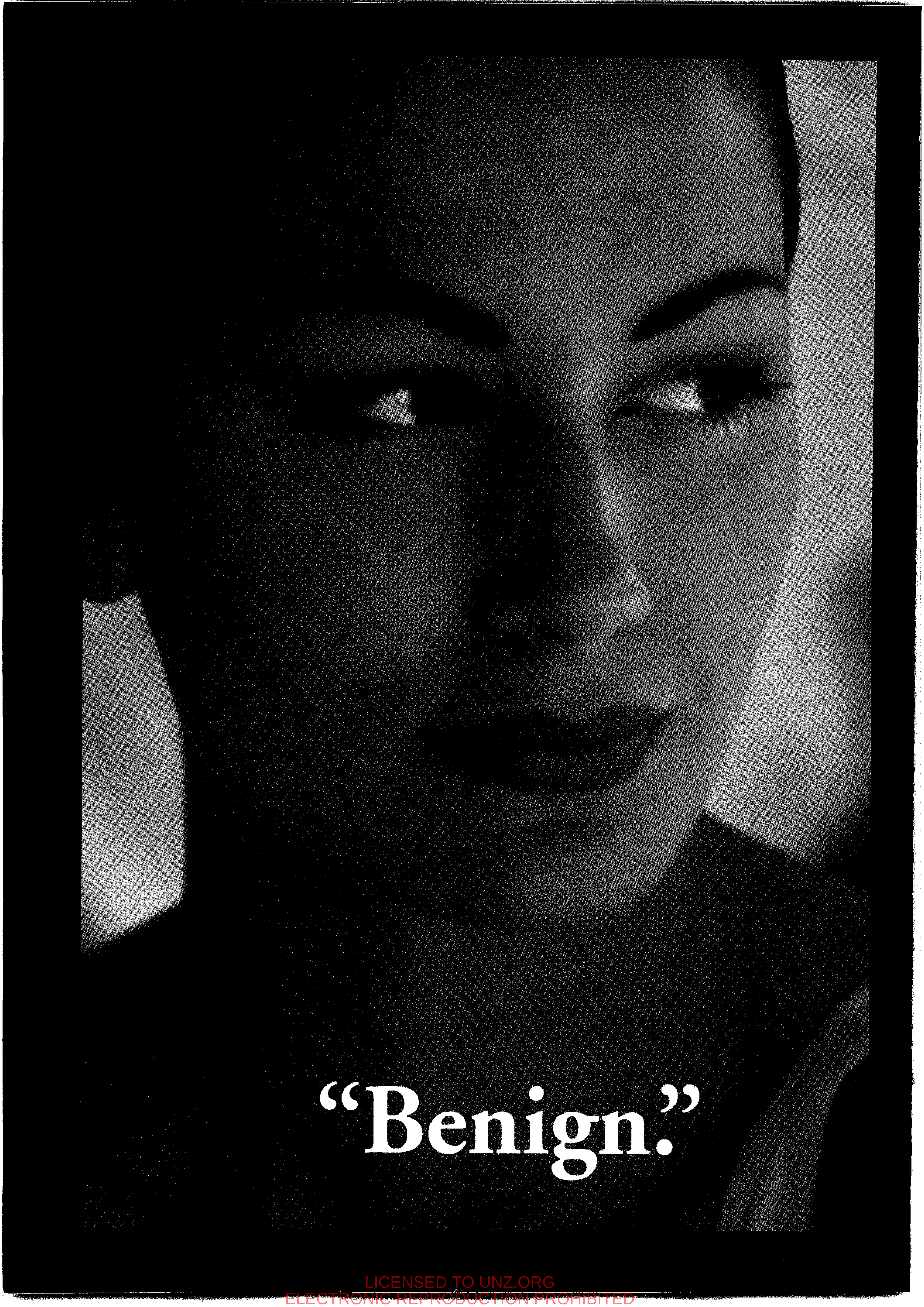
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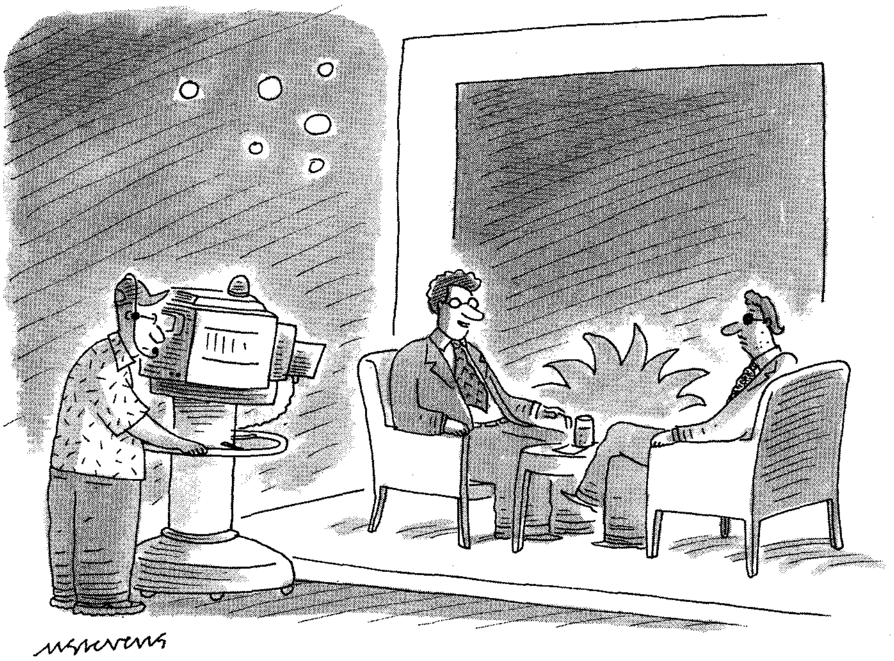
JULIE HECHT (Fiction, p. 164) is the author of the book of stories "Do the Windows Open?," all of which originally appeared in *The New Yorker*. ♦



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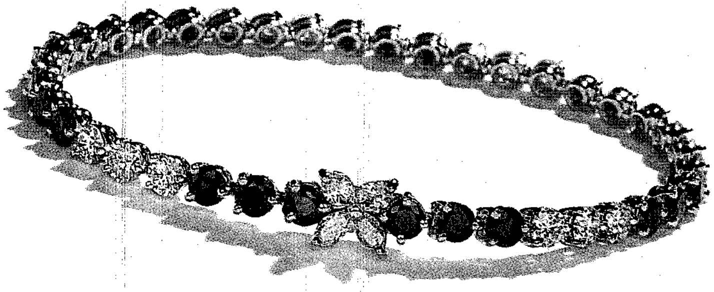

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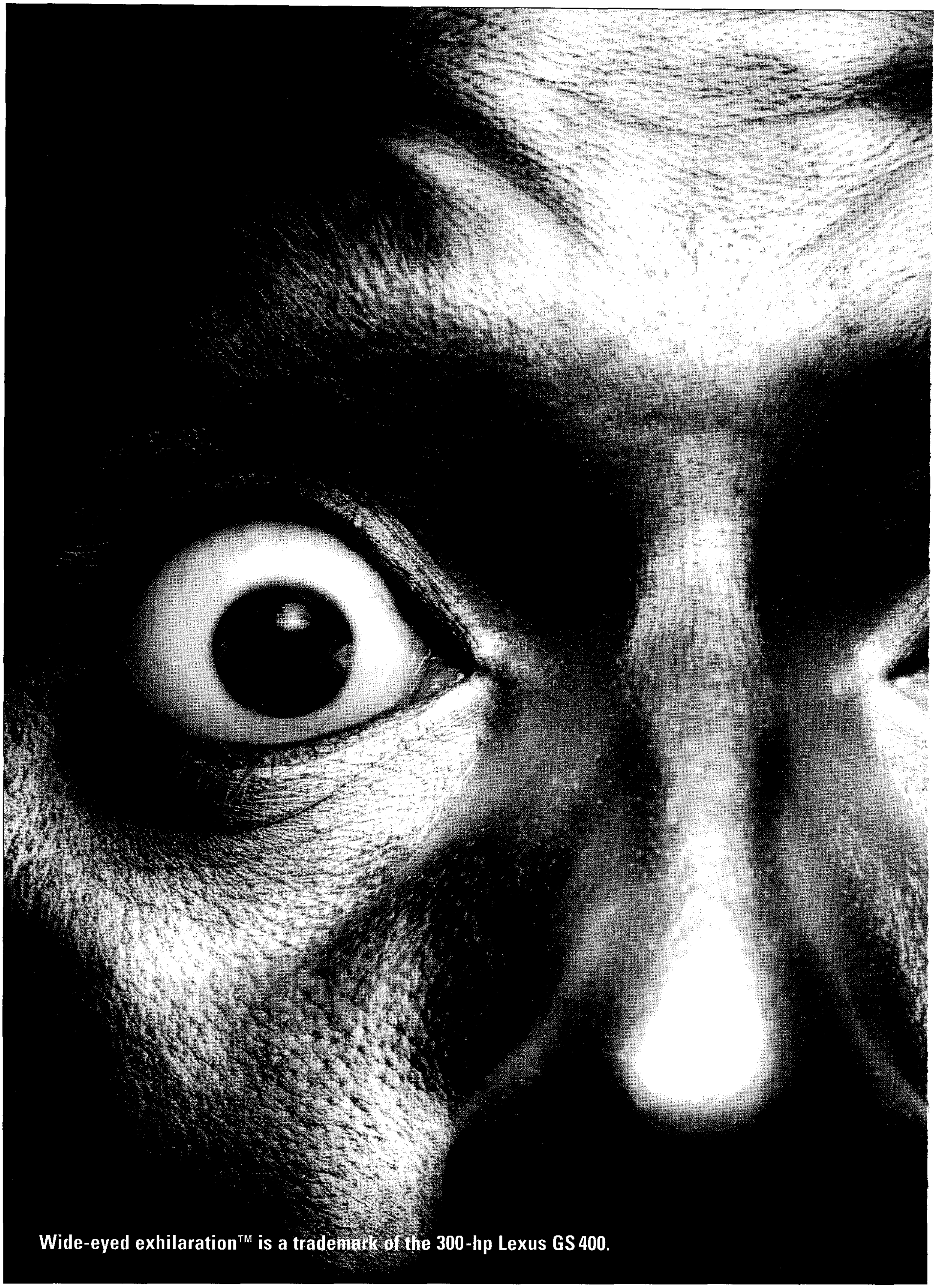
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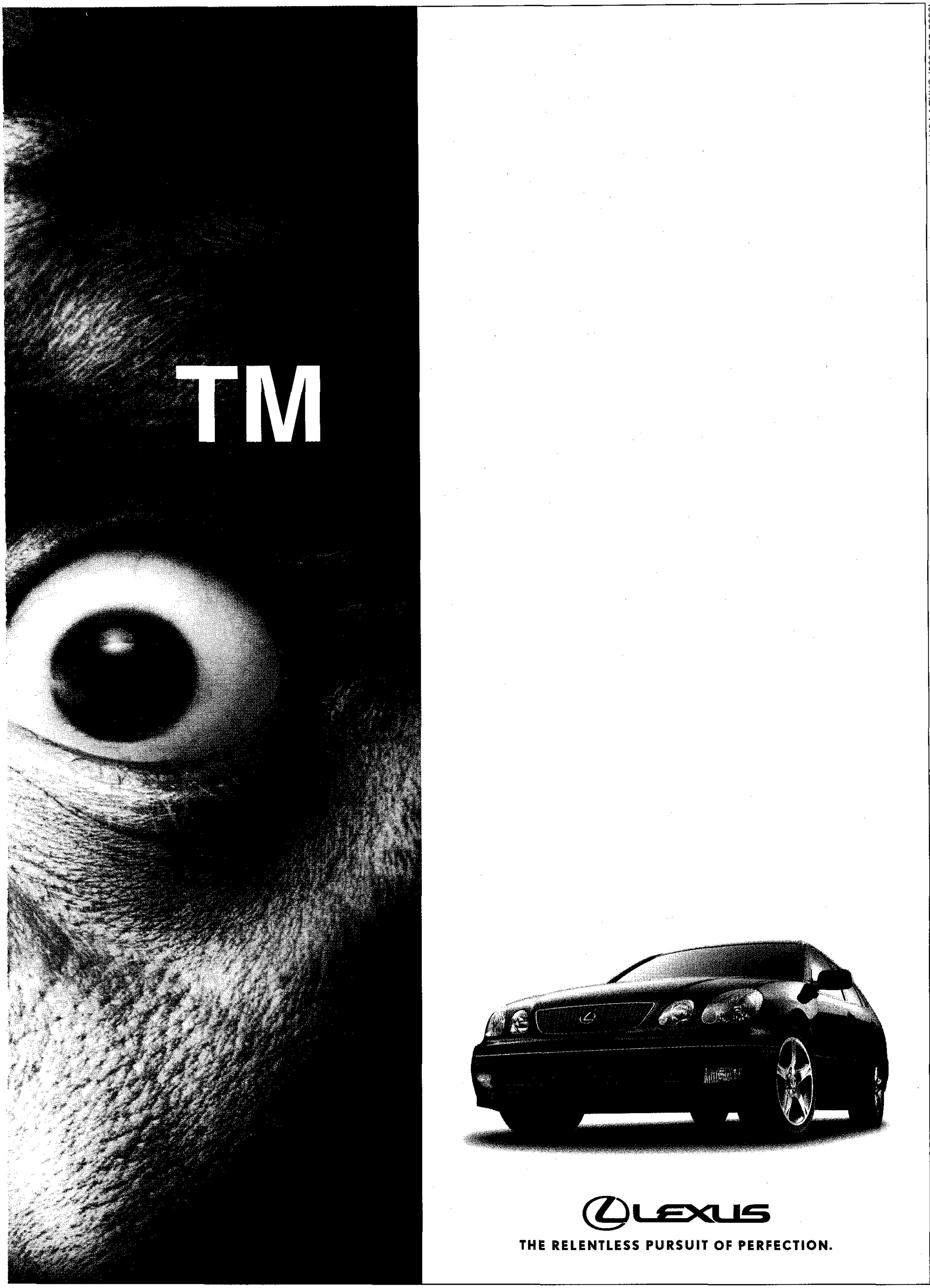
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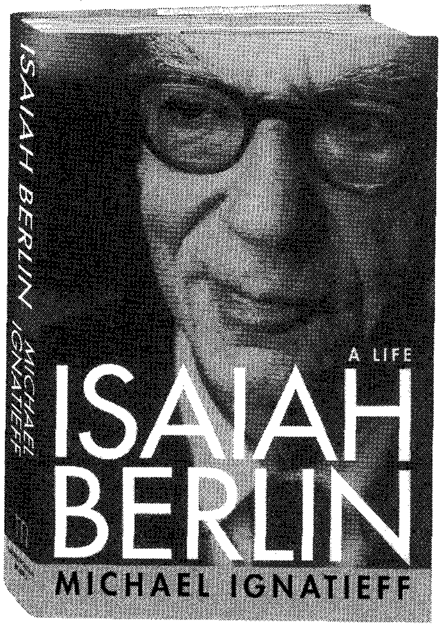

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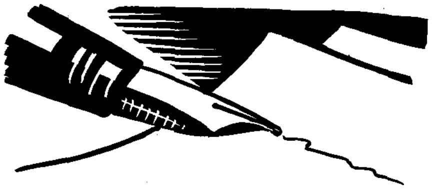

THE CANCER WARS

I was treated for breast cancer and the side effects of chemotherapy through a combination of conventional medicine and surgery with acupuncture and herbs, which I found helpful. I am confident that others will benefit from Jerome Groopman's description of the alternative treatments that Dr. William Fair, the former head of urology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, had the courage to explore for his own cancer ("Dr. Fair's Tumor," October 26th & November 2nd). It is too bad that so many doctors give only lip service to alternative medicine until they become ill themselves.

MARGARITA EASTON
Sagaponack, N.Y.

My wife underwent high-dose chemotherapy and a stem-cell transplant in 1995 for Stage II breast cancer. After reading Jerome Groopman's article ("A Healing Hell," October 19th), we reread my diary from the year of her treatment and realized that neither one could sufficiently convey the horror of HDC and the years of recovery. What people living with cancer care about is survival and quality of life, and yet the quality of life is dramatically impaired by the possible long-term or even permanent side effects of HDC: chronic fatigue, pain, neuropathy, hearing and memory loss, cognitive impairment, and heart, liver, lung, or kidney damage. The fact is, HDC for breast cancer is experimental, and its efficacy is unproved. If studies conclude that it is a successful treatment for breast cancer, the price—quality of life—is high. If it does *not* prove to provide a high over-all survival rate, HDC is robbing the breast-cancer patient of a significant portion of the relative comfort and health she would have had in the remainder of her life. We have no regrets about undergoing the transplant, but the jury is still out on whether we would make the same decision again.

GEORGE GRANT
New York City

The necessary implication of Dr. Groopman's recurrent theme of extraordinary treatment for cancer patients—that such costly interventions will be available only to a privileged few—is troubling and ethically problematic.

CHESTER M. BOLTWOOD, JR., M.D.
Modesto, Calif.

THE FINAL FRONTIER

Peter Landesman's article about my company, SpaceDev, and me ("Starship Private Enterprise," October 26th & November 2nd) contained a few small inaccuracies, caused in part by the fact that the company's plans are still evolving. Our Near Earth Asteroid Prospector (NEAP) will probably not drop a camera onto the lunar surface but may fly an ultraviolet spectrometer to look for evidence of surface-water ice. None of the funding that NASA earmarks for private enterprise has yet been distributed to scientists who want their instruments to ride on NEAP, though those decisions will be made soon. SpaceDev's revenues from NEAP's trip could be as much as a hundred and twenty million dollars, not at least that. The company stock is listed, but on the NASDAQ Over the Counter Bulletin Board (OTCBB:SPDV). Finally, and perhaps most important, I do not have a closet full of identical blue suits; my suits are all gray pinstripes.

JIM BENSON
Chairman and C.E.O., SpaceDev
San Diego, Calif.

The fatal flaw in Jim Benson's view of space as "a sanctuary from mankind's ecological despoliation of the home planet" is that space exploration itself contributes to our ecological plight while squandering intellectual and financial resources that would be better spent cleaning up the environment here on Earth.

MARCO DELICATO
Detroit, Mich.

•

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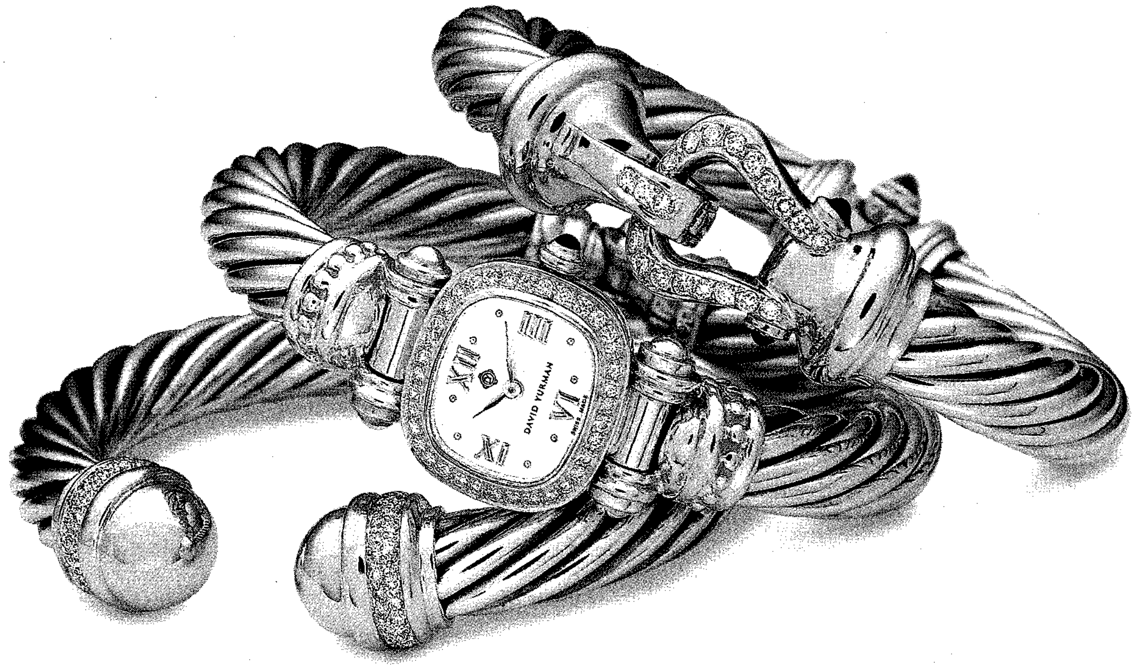
DAVID YURMAN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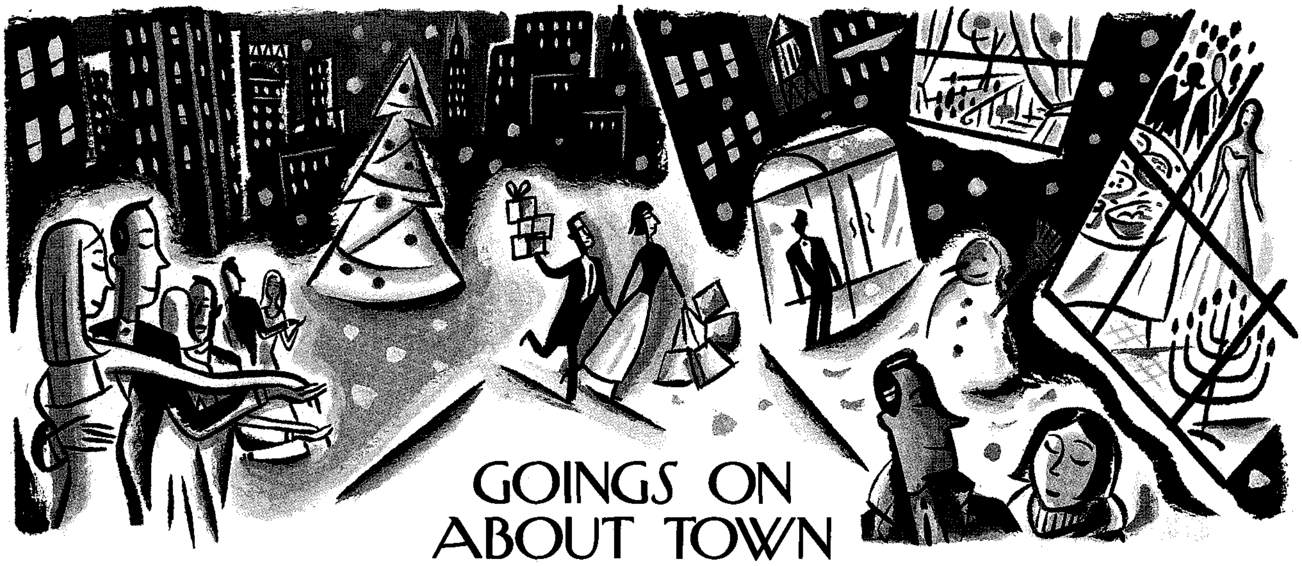

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13	14	15				

THE HOLIDAYS

"THE RADIO CITY CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR"—The annual extravaganza this year includes a singing Santa Claus, a dancing-bear "Nutcracker Suite," and a live-animal Nativity, but absolutely no long-legged, high-kicking Rockettes (kidding!). (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Through Jan. 3.)

"A CHRISTMAS CAROL"—Roger Daltrey portrays Ebenezer Scrooge, in a musical version of Dickens's holiday tale. Alan Menken wrote the score. (Theatre at Madison Square Garden. 307-4111. Through Dec. 27.) . . . ¶ On Dec. 6 at 2, Gregg Whiteside, of classical-music radio station WQXR, reads from Dickens's original 1843 manuscript, at the Morgan Library, where those pages are on view through Jan. 3. (29 E. 36th St. For more information, call 685-0008, ext. 347.)

NUTCRACKERS—In addition to the New York City Ballet performances (through Jan. 3; see Dance listings), several other plummy versions are available. "The Yorkville Nutcracker," choreographed by Francis Patrelle (and danced with the help of a few moonlighters from City Ballet), transposes the action to New York. (Kaye Playhouse, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Dec. 10-11 at 7 and Dec. 12-13 at 2 and 7.) . . . ¶ An hour-long child-friendly version by the New York Theatre Ballet goes on pointe at Florence Gould Hall. (55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Dec. 18 at 3:30 and 6 and Dec. 19-20 and Dec. 26-27 at 1 and 3:30.) . . . ¶ The choreographer Donald Byrd uses the Duke Ellington–Billy Strayhorn arrangement of the Tchaikovsky score for "The Harlem Nutcracker." (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Dec. 22, Dec. 25, and Dec. 29-Jan. 1 at 8; Dec. 23, Dec. 26, and Jan. 2 at 2 and 8; and Dec. 27 and Jan. 3 at 2 and 7.)

BREAD AND PUPPET CIRCUS—The Vermont troupe presents a special family matinée during its Dec. 9-20 engagement, featuring storytelling, a brass band, and giant apes, tigers, and horses. Saturdays and Sundays at 3. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109.)

GREENERY—The observatory atop the World Trade Center wants the world's highest Christmas tree, and it's holding a competition to get it: visitors are invited to bring a decorated tree (it must fit in the elevator, and its ornaments must withstand forty-mile-an-hour winds) to the observation deck on Dec. 1 at 10:30 A.M. The winner receives a check for four hundred and twenty dollars, one dollar for every metre the tree is above the sidewalk. Too bad they don't pay by the foot; the tower is a thousand three hundred and seventy-seven feet tall. For more information, call 323-2341.

MORE TREES—A seventy-three-foot, seven-ton Norway spruce, flown in from Richfield, Ohio (where do they get planes that big—from Santa himself?), has taken up residence at Rockefeller Center. Garth Brooks, Jewel, Babyface, Cyndi Lauper, Trisha Yearwood, and the Rockettes will lend their talents to the lighting ceremony. (Dec. 2 at 7. The tree stays up through Jan. 3.) . . . ¶ The New York University Brass Ensemble and neighborhood carollers accompany the lighting of a forty-foot balsam fir beneath the Arch in Washington Square Park. (Dec. 8 at 6.) . . . ¶ Resplendent eighteenth-century Neapolitan angels grace a twenty-foot artificial blue spruce in the Metropolitan Museum's Medieval Court. A baroque crèche surrounds the tree's base, and every Friday and Saturday night a lighting ceremony is held at 7. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. Through Jan. 3.) . . . ¶ The South Street Seaport's singing Christmas tree comes to life with the sounds of the St. Cecilia Chorus. (East River at Fulton St. Fridays at 6:30 and 7:30 and Saturdays and Sundays at 3 and 4. Through Jan. 1.)

HANUKKAH—The first candle will be lit on the thirty-two-foot menorah at Fifth Ave. and 59th St. at dusk on Dec. 13. New lights will be added each evening through Dec. 20, with singing, dancing, and hot latkes for all on the first and the last nights at 5:30. (For information, call 718-778-6000.)

SOLSTICE CELEBRATIONS—Saxophonist Paul Winter leads the charge against the darkness, backed by his consort, guitarist Oscar Castro-Neves, Uilleann piper Davy Spillane, and other musicians (including one who rises a hundred feet above the audience on a bosun's chair to ring a seven-foot "sun gong"). (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133. Dec. 10-11 at 7:30 and Dec. 12 at 2 and 7:30.) . . . ¶ Norwegian storyteller Rolf Stang and Icelandic actor Sigrin Gylfadottir narrate the *Kalevala*, the Finnish epic about three semidivine brothers and the creation of the world, in this year's Christmas Revels, a solstice celebration of song, dance, audience participation, and Ralph Lee puppetry. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Dec. 11 at 8, Dec. 12 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 13 at 2 and 6.) . . . ¶ More than a dozen musicians dressed in kimonos play their *shakuhachis* (Japanese bamboo flutes) at the exact moment of the solstice, filling St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie with "Winter Music," a song composed for the occasion by James Nyoraku Schlefer. (Second Ave. at 10th St. For more information, call 718-499-7793. Dec. 21 at 8:56 A.M.)

KWANZAA—Dancers and musicians gather at a traditional African marketplace at the American Museum of Natural History. (Central Park W. at 79th St. 769-5100. Dec. 27 from noon to 5.) . . . ¶ Malika Lee Whitney, an arts and education consultant, leads afternoons of storytelling, instrument making, and other activities for children and adults. (Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, Harlem Meer, Central Park. 860-1370. Dec. 29-31 from 2 to 4.)

CHRISTMAS POST—The first Christmas card ever printed—a three-by-five-inch hand-colored lithograph from 1843 depicting children eating plums and adults toasting with glasses of good cheer—is on display at the New-York Historical Society, which is also holding a free holiday open house featuring dancing, music, and a special reading of Clement Clarke Moore's poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas." (2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. 873-3400. Dec. 6 from 1 to 4.)

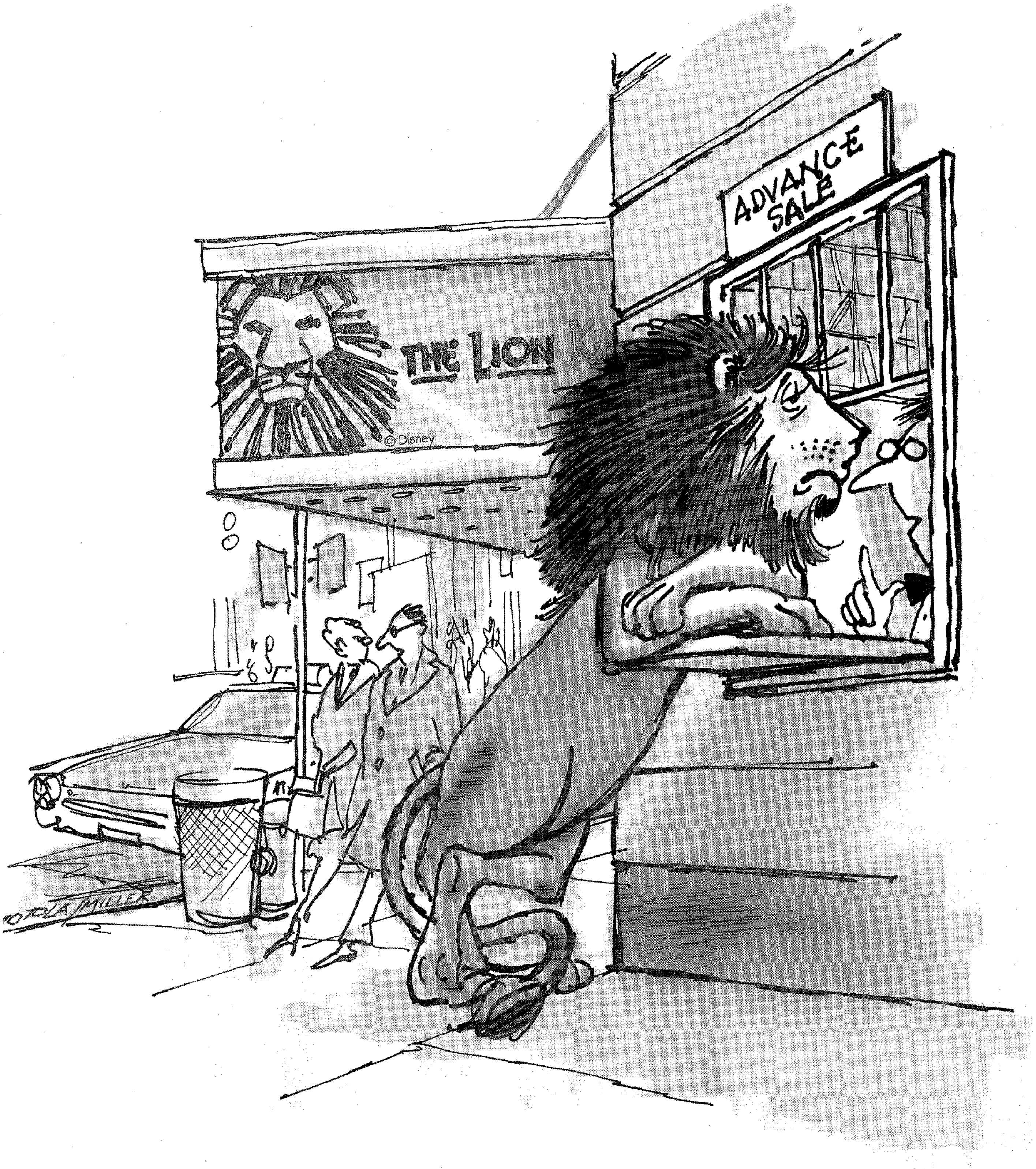
CITY SINGERS—The twelve-member chorus offers a program of traditional and contemporary Christmas music, with theatrical interludes. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 253-0533. Dec. 10-12 and Dec 17-19 at 8 and Dec. 13 and Dec. 20 at 2 and 7.)

"BROADCAST FROM BETHLEHEM"—Opera East tells an old story in a new light, as seven actors portraying television reporters comment on such Middle Eastern developments as hotel overcrowding, reports of strange stars, and King Herod's edicts, while a chorus performs traditional carols and works by Handel, Bach, and Berlioz. (Broadway Presbyterian Church, Broadway at 114th St. Dec. 5-6 at 8 and Dec. 12 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

CHRISTMAS CAMPING—Entertainment for those who think the holidays should be a drag: "Jesus Christ, It's Your Birthday!," starring Jackie Beat, who'll offer various activities to ward off the depression that the season often brings. Sundays at 10, through Dec. 20. (Fez, 380 Lafayette St. 462-9077.) . . . ¶ "Do You Hear What We Hear?," a cabaret-style Christmas party with Kiki & Herb. Dec. 4-6 and Dec 11-13 at 11. Continues through Jan. 3. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

CHRISTMAS OPERAS—Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors" (presented by the Little Orchestra Society at Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; Dec. 5 at 11 A.M., 1, and 3) is a seasonal staple, but an alternative arrives this year with the After Dinner Opera Company's production of Seymour Barab's "Father of the Child," described as "a light and lively miracle opera" in which Mary faces such twentieth-century problems as deciding whether she wants a baby or a career. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 477-6212. Dec. 5 at 1:30 and 3:30.)

Advertisement


ADVANCE SALE
THE LION K
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TOTOLA / MILLER

"I don't care who you know in the cast, you gotta wait like everyone else."

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Baby Redboots' Revenge—A one-man comedy about a bitter former child star (Sean Sullivan) working as a polka-band bass player. Dec. 3-5 and Dec. 10-12 at 10 and Dec. 6 and Dec. 13 at 3. Continues through Dec. 20. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

The Blue Room—Nicole Kidman and Iain Glen portray five characters each in David Hare's adaptation of Schnitzler's "La Ronde," a series of linked seduction scenes. A Donmar Warehouse production, directed by Sam Mendes. In previews through Dec. 12. Opens Dec. 13 at 3. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Bosoms and Neglect—The second offering in the Signature Theatre Company's John Guare season is the playwright's 1979 black comedy. Mary Louise Wilson leads the cast. In previews through Dec. 12. Opens Dec. 13 at 6:45. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

A Couple of Blaguards—An autobiographical two-man show, written by Frank McCourt and his brother Malachy and performed by Shay Duffin and Mickey Kelly. In previews. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Electra—Zoë Wanamaker has the title role in a Donmar Warehouse/McCarter Theatre production of Sophocles' tragedy. Two previews on Dec. 2. Opens Dec. 3 at 6:45. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Extra Man—Richard Greenburg's 1992 drama about a writer who engineers an affair between two friends. Glynnis O'Connor is in the cast. Previews Dec. 3-6. Opens Dec. 7 at 8 and runs through Dec. 21. (Samuel Beckett, 412 W. 42nd St. 594-2826.)

Far East—An American military officer (Michael Hayden) is caught in a triangle involving his commander's wife, in a drama by A. R. Gurney, set during the Korean War. Previews begin Dec. 11. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Freedomland—Amy Freed's new comedy, about a dysfunctional family, stars Veanne Cox as a successful artist who paints hobo clowns. Howard Shalwitz is the director. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

"Hope" Is the Thing with Feathers—Maria Tucci leads the cast in a new play by Frank Pugliese, about the loss of faith of three disparate couples. Randolph Curtis Rand is the director. In previews Dec. 2-8. Opens Dec. 9 at 8 and continues through Dec. 19. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 242-4770.)

Jews and Jesus—A musical comedy about interfaith relationships, with a book by Oren Safdie and music and lyrics by Ronnie Cohen. In previews through Dec. 1. Opens Dec. 2 at 8 and runs through Dec. 16. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

Mercy—Laura Cahill's drama centers on the lives of four young Manhattanites. In previews through Dec. 8. Opens Dec. 9 at 8. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told—A fresh version of a very old tale, by Paul Rudnick. Joanna Adler, Lisa Kron, Amy Sedaris, and Alan Tudyk are in the cast. Directed by Christopher Ashley. In previews through Dec. 9. Opens Dec. 10 at 8. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

On the Shoulders of . . .—Master juggler Michael Moschen comes to the Kitchen for four performances only. Dec. 9-12 at 8. (512 W. 19th St. 255-5793.)

Parade—The story of Leo Frank, a Northerner wrongly convicted of murdering a child in the South in 1913, is the basis of a musical by Alfred Uhry (book) and Jason Robert Brown (music and lyrics). Directed by Harold Prince. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Spread Eagle—Brian Murray portrays an acclaimed British actor who leaves the stage for a life in Mexico, in a dark comedy by Jim Luigs. In previews through Dec. 6. Opens Dec. 8 at 8. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Stop Kiss—Diana Son's romantic comedy takes place in the aftermath of a kiss between two women. Jo Bonney is the director. In previews through Dec. 5. Opens Dec. 6 at 7. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

OPENED RECENTLY

All Under Heaven—Valerie Harper portrays Pearl Buck in a drama about the author's life, co-written by Ms. Harper and Dyke Garrison. (Century Theatre, 111 W. 15th St. 239-6200.)

August Snow and **Night Dance**—Repertory stagings of two plays—one set in 1937, the other in 1945—about a North Carolina family, by the novelist Reynolds Price. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-0231.)

Carry the Tiger to the Mountain—A drama inspired by the story of Vincent Chin, a Chinese-American who was murdered by unemployed auto workers in Detroit. Written by Cherylene Lee and presented by Pan Asian Rep. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660. Closes Dec. 5.)

Chère Maître—A dramatic reading of correspondence between George Sand and Gustave Flaubert, presented by Irene Worth and Peter Eyre. Wednesdays through Sundays, through Dec. 20. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051.)

Collected Stories—Despite a splendid performance by Uta Hagen, as an aging writer who tells her protégée (Lorca Simons) the one story about her own life which she hasn't written, this revival of Donald Margulies's 1997 drama only points out how poorly constructed the relationship between the two women is. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Communicating Doors—A wonderful farce with a fairy-tale ending, by Alan Ayckbourn. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 13th St. 239-6200.)

Duet! A Romantic Fable—The Adobe Theatre Company's amiable spoof of all things fifties, from lounge acts to monster movies to overwrought dream sequences. The cast is charming, and the direction is not overwhelming—a big step in the right direction for Adobe. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 239-6200.)

Eight!—A one-man musical portrait of Henry VIII, written by and starring Steeve Arlen. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 279-4200. Closes Dec. 20.)

Fool Moon—Clowning and music with Bill Irwin, David Shiner, and the Red Clay Ramblers, who return to Broadway for a limited engagement of their 1993 show. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

Footloose—A musical adaptation of the 1984 film, co-written by Dean Pitchford (who also wrote the screenplay) and Walter Bobbie. With music by Tom Snow and lyrics by Mr. Pitchford. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Getting and Spending—Broadway is too much with us; evening and afternoon, / Waiting for the ending, we lay waste two full hours: / Little we see on the Stage that is ours; / We have given sixty dollars away—for someone, a sordid boon! (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

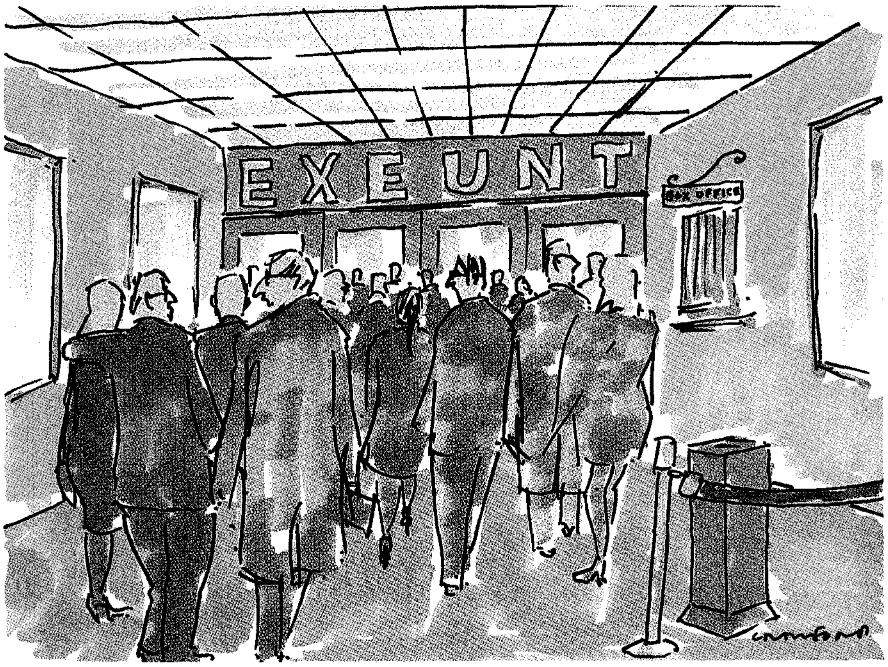
Impossible Marriage—Holly Hunter leads the cast of Beth Henley's new drama, set in Savannah, about a young woman's marriage to a philandering older man. Stephen Wadsworth is the director. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

I'm Still Here . . . Damn It!—If you're not ambivalent about Sandra Bernhard's new show, you may have missed the point: she's spent her career keeping us guessing about her motives and sincerity, and it's still interestingly hard to tell where the commentary on celebrity narcissism ends and the narcissistic celebrity begins. What stands out in this show, Bernhard's first on Broadway, is her mastery of the emotional hairpin turns in her material—a tender moment can become a hilarious monster-diva moment in seconds—and her terrific, strong singing voice. What more can you ask for? (Reviewed in our issue of 11/16/98.) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

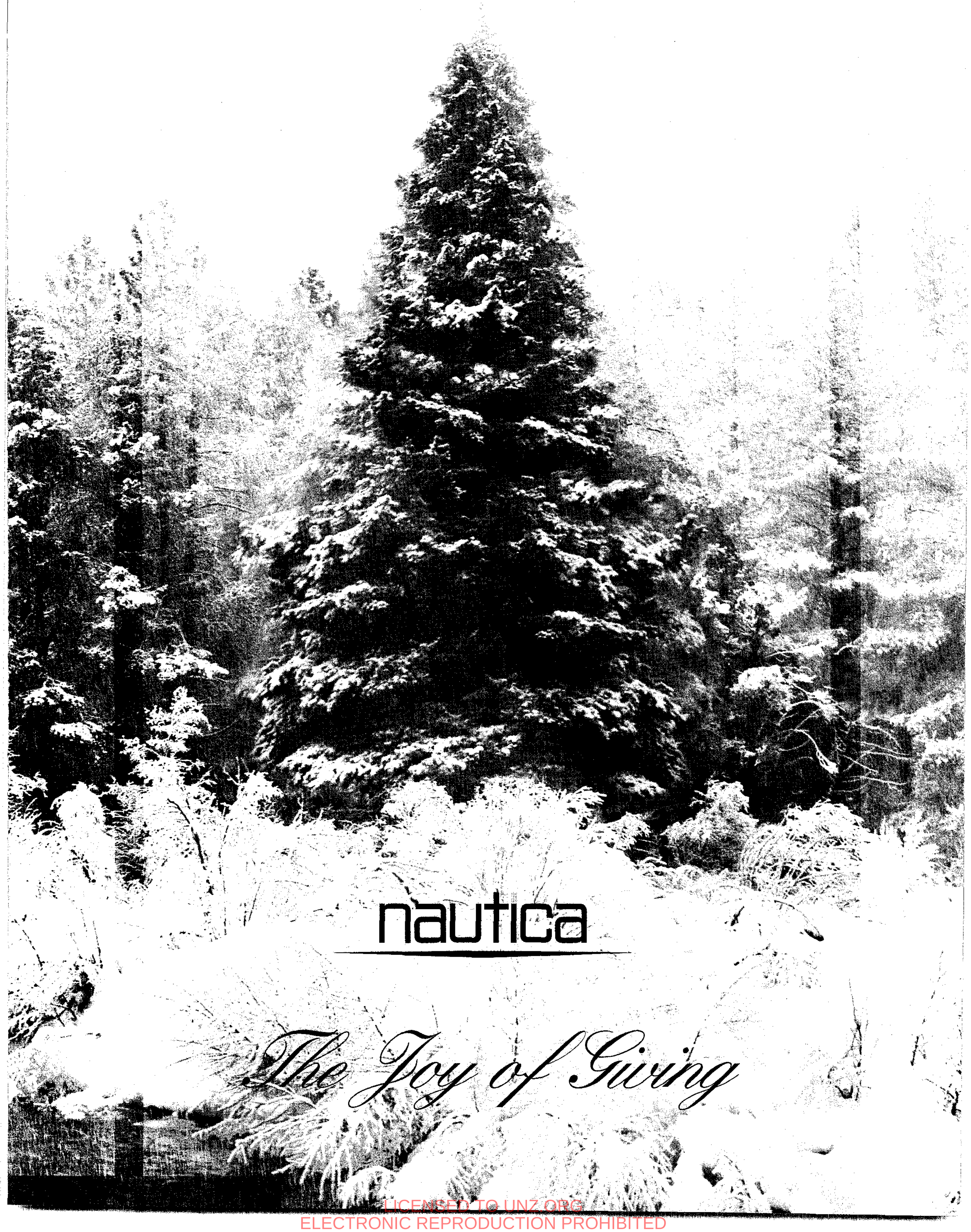
Killer Joe—In Tracy Letts's graphic dark comedy, an American family striving for a better life—in this case, a bunch of losers living in a trailer outside Dallas—hires a hit man to help things along. Though the experience sometimes feels like being trapped in Sam Shepard's claustrophobic Nowheresville while being smacked around by Quentin Tarantino, the terrific production is so vividly unself-conscious that you hardly feel assaulted at all—in fact, you enjoy it. Scott Glenn and Amanda Plummer are billed as the stars, but the whole cast is excellent. Wilson Milam is the director. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

Little Me—Martin Short and Faith Prince star in a revival of the 1962 musical comedy by Neil Simon (book), Cy Coleman (music), and Carolyn Leigh (lyrics). Direction and choreography are by Rob Marshall. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

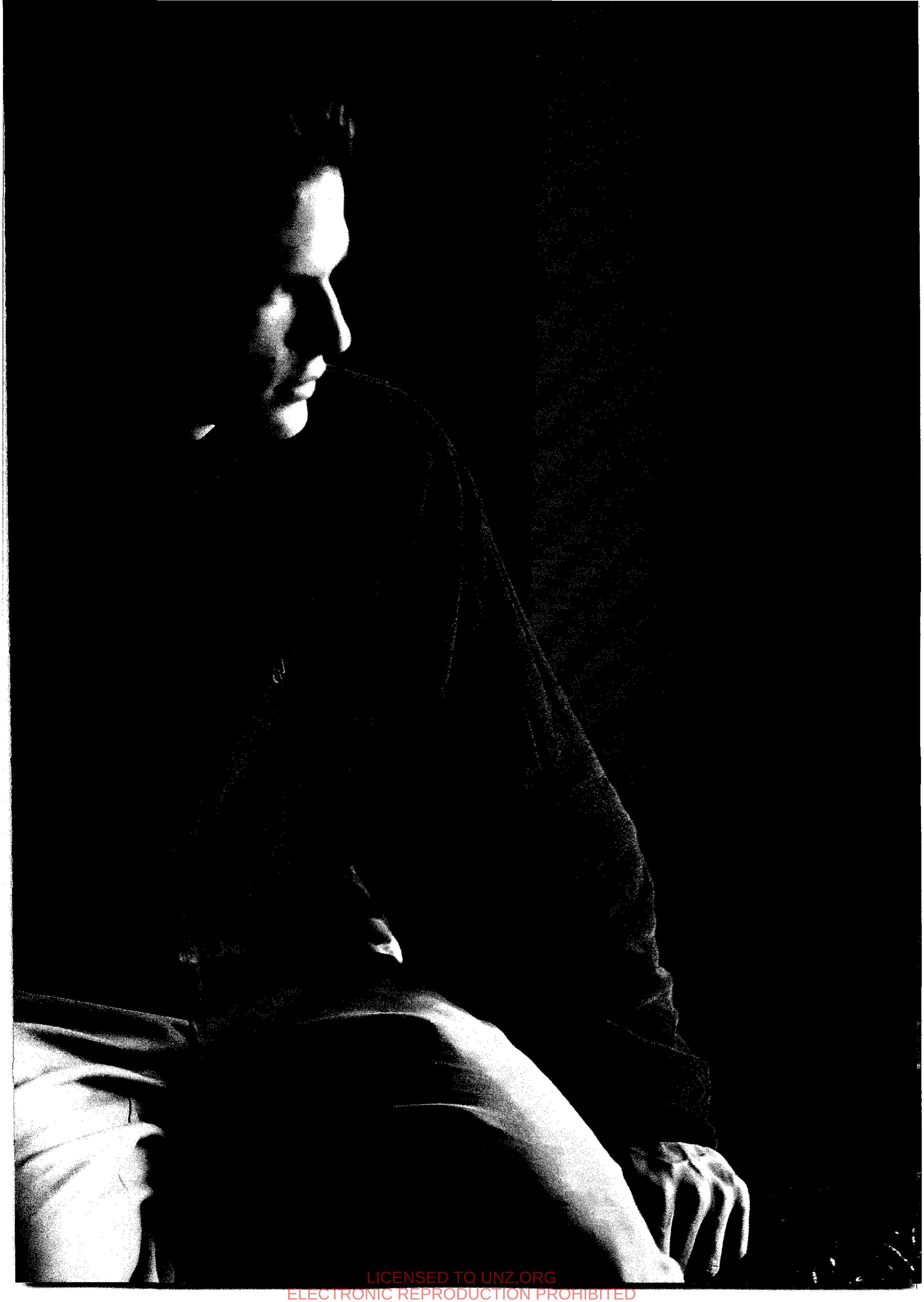
The Memory of Water—Or, "The Memory of Orton, Ayckbourn, and Nichols." In the English playwright Shelagh Stephenson's play,

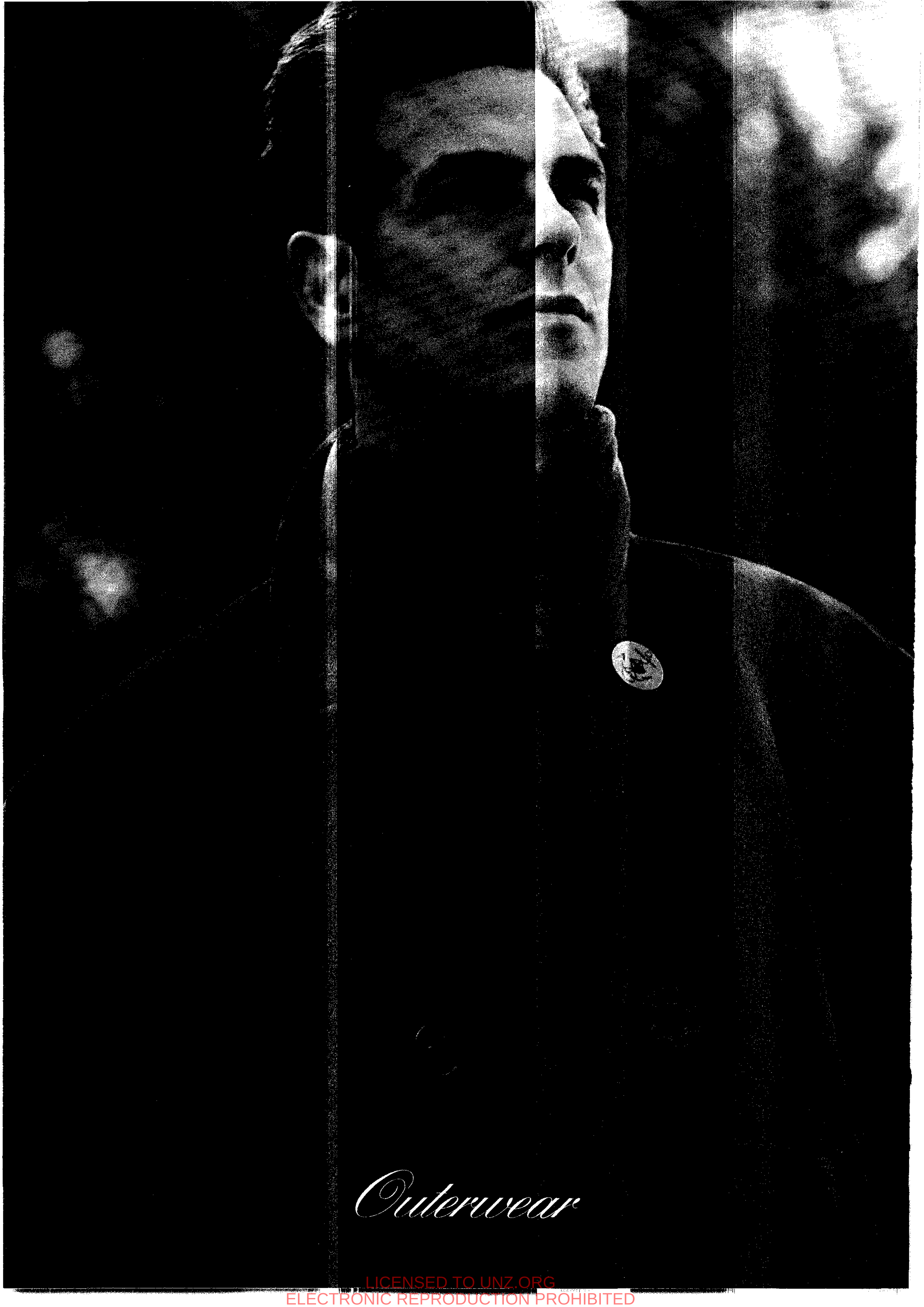


MICHAEL CRAWFORD


nautica
The Joy of Giving

Sportswear




Outerwear

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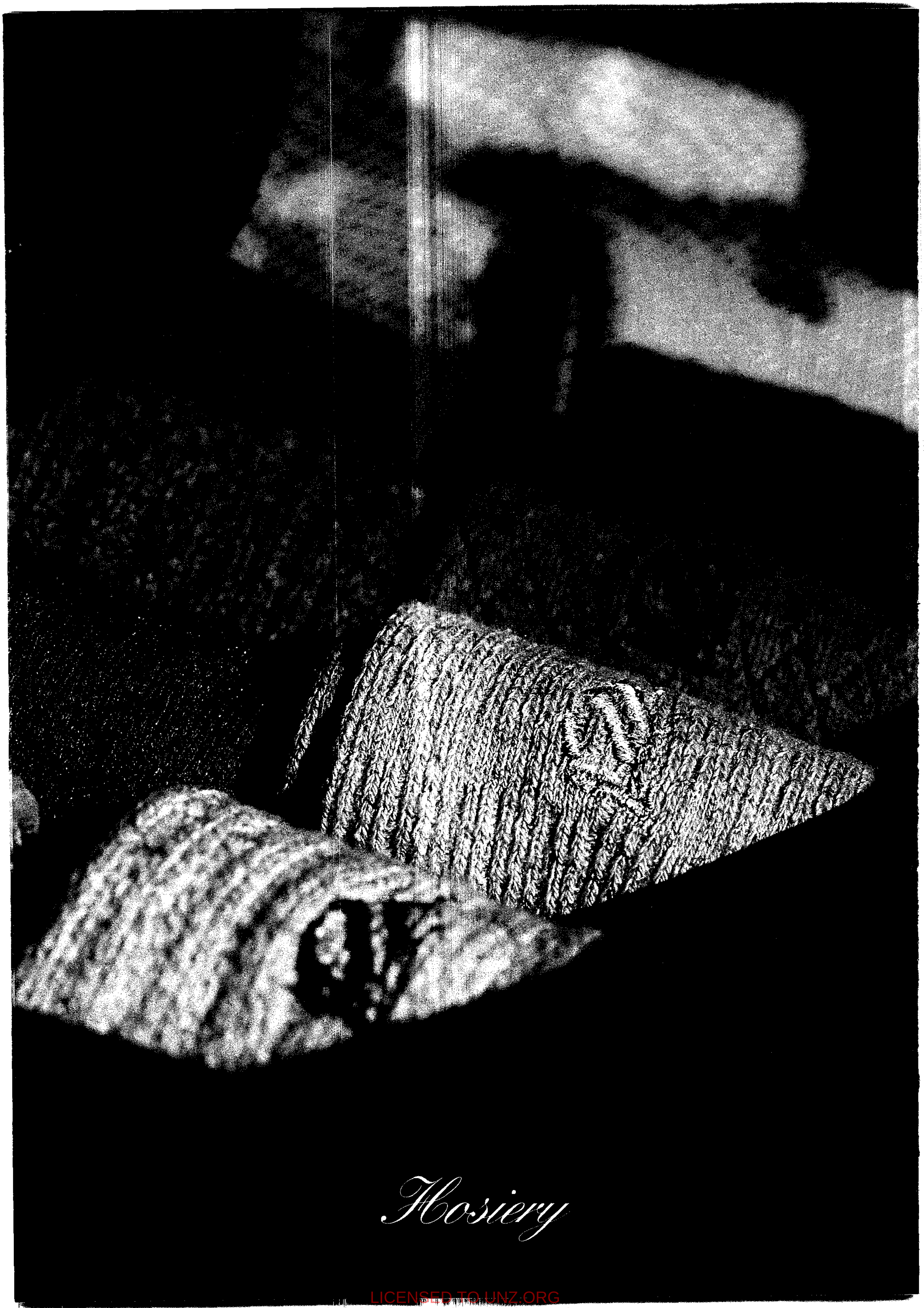
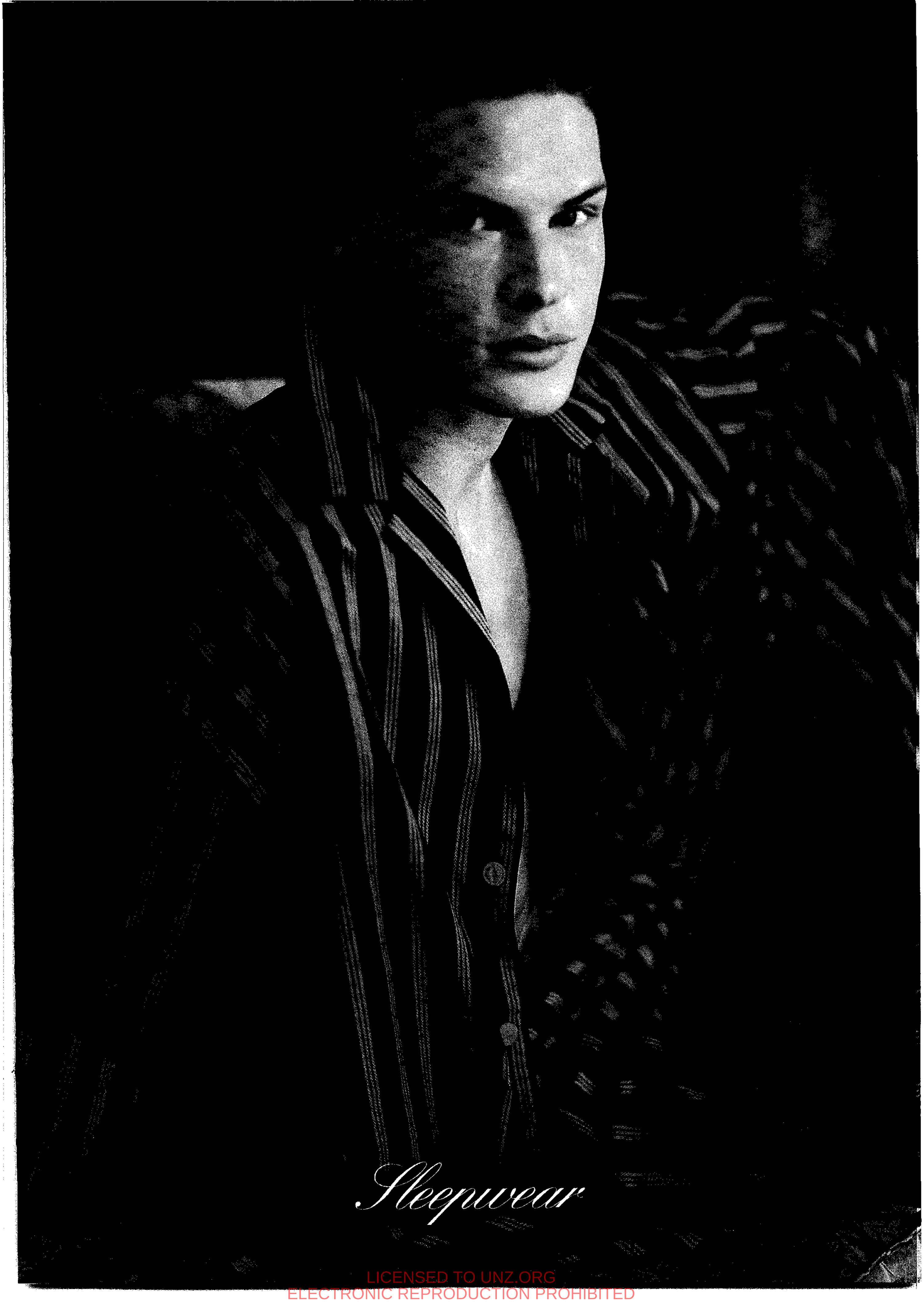
Scarves and Gloves



Hosiery


Sleepwear

Robes

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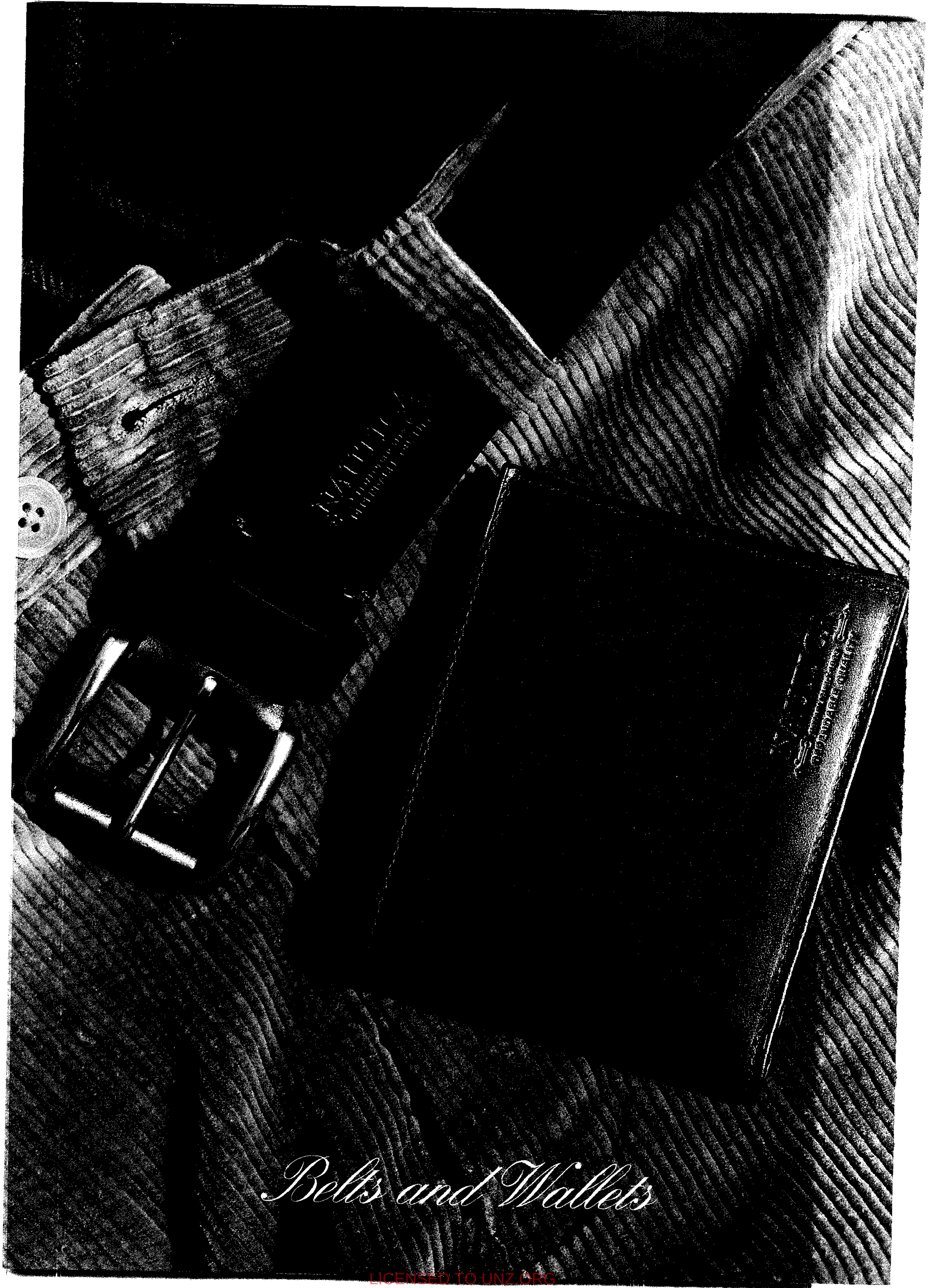
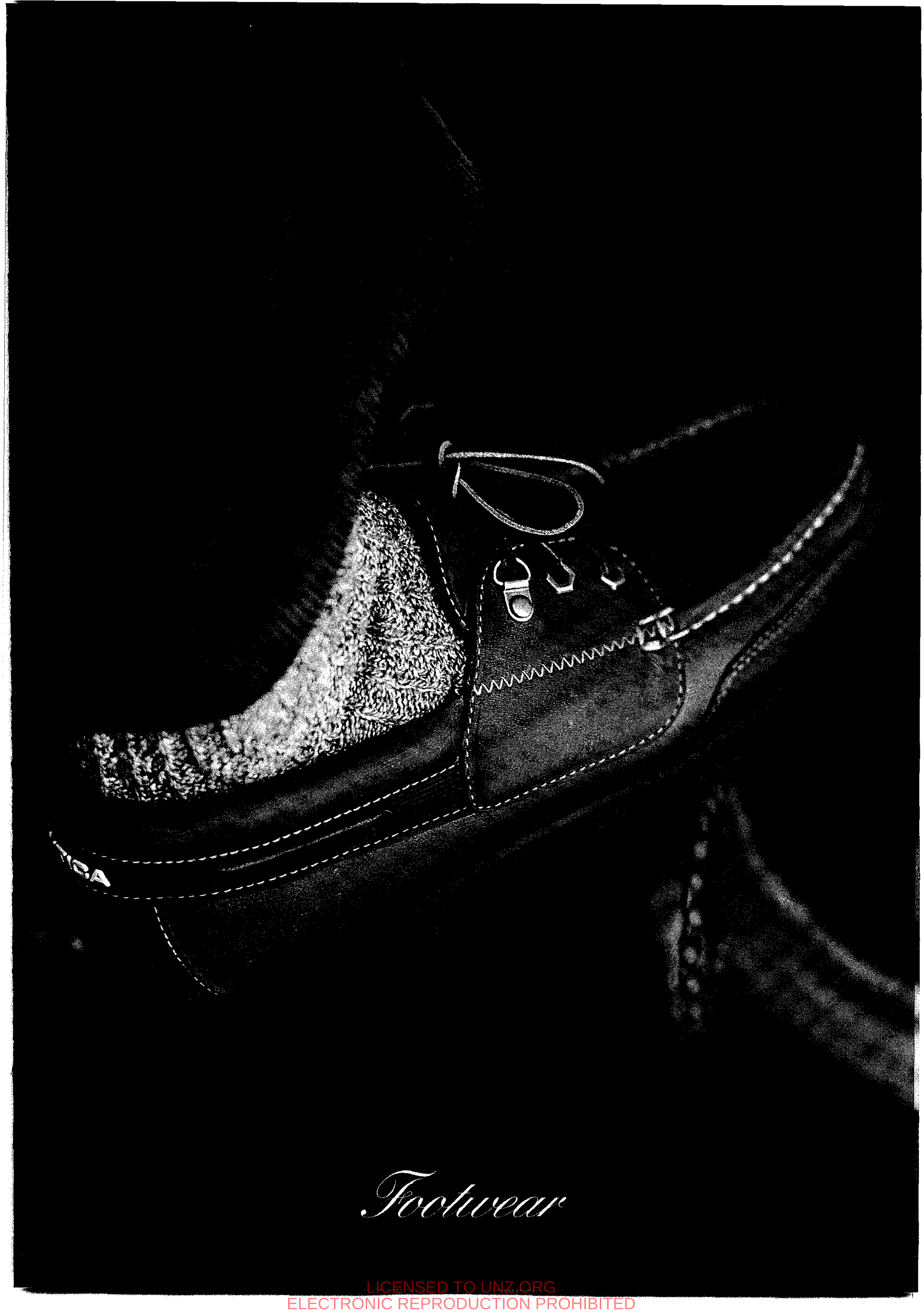
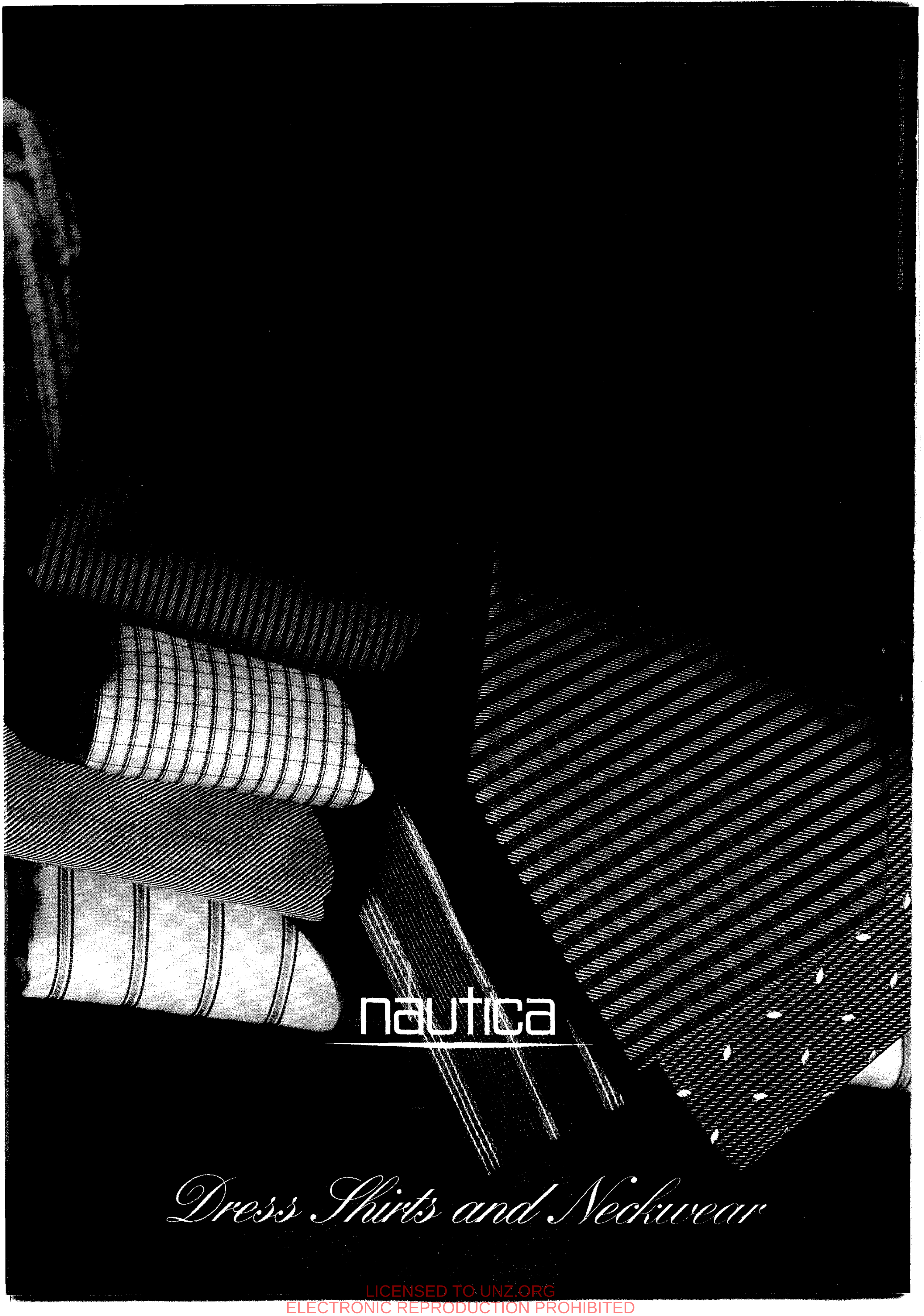


Belts and Wallets



Footwear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Dress Shirts and Neckwear
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three lonesome sisters assemble at their mother's funeral, where, as usual, the ghost has all the best lines. The expert Suzanne Bertish leads a good cast, but the work itself is too callow to properly mix the potent cocktail of high jinks and heartbreak. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

The Miser—A Pearl Theatre Company staging of Molière's comedy. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes Dec. 6.)

The Mystery of Irma Vep—It's not difficult to imagine what made this farce a hit back in 1984: the play's author and original star, the immensely gifted Charles Ludlam, who died in 1987 of complications due to AIDS. As staged and performed by that production's co-star, Everett Quinton, this version ends up a bore, despite its fairly outré conceit—"Rebecca" meets Agatha Christie meets pure camp. Drag has been out of the closet for a long time now; this is a relic of a more innocent time. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

The Old Settler—Leslie Uggams and Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr., portray a pair of mismatched lovers in 1943 Harlem. The play, written by John Henry Redwood, has fine characterizations and delightful jokes, but the structure is predictably melodramatic, and Mr. Redwood tosses in so many details about the neighborhood and the times that he occasionally leaves his actors stranded in a morass of facts. Nevertheless, the whole cast (which includes Lynda Gravátt and Rosalyn Coleman), under the strong direction of Harold Scott, overcomes it all. And the pairing of Ms. Uggams' deft radiance with Mr. Simmons' eager charm is a pleasure to see. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

On the Town—The New York Shakespeare Festival's revival of the 1944 Comden and Green classic makes its move to Broadway. George C. Wolfe is the director. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Over the River and Through the Woods—In Joe DiPietro's new comedy, a young man planning his future clashes with his four Italian-American grandparents. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Peter Pan—Former Olympic gymnast Cathy Rigby returns to the title role of the 1954 musical. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Sakina's Restaurant—Aasif Mandvi plays six characters in his one-man exploration of the South Asian community in New York. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

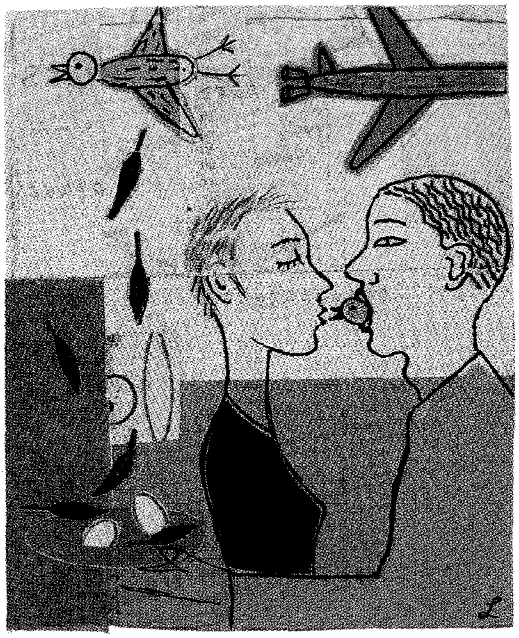
The Shaughraun—The nineteenth-century playwright Dion Boucicault's melodrama, staged by the Irish Repertory Theatre. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Side Man—Warren Leight's astute, elegiac play is a young man's bittersweet homage to his crazy, warring parents and to the mysteries of the jazz life that divided them. The father (played by Frank Wood with superb passive-aggressive vacancy), a big-band trumpet player, speaks articulately in his art but is a kind of zombie at home, which bewilders his son (a charming, laid-back Christian Slater) and drives his wife (Wendy Makkena) to drink. The son serves as a biographer of sorts, whose combined detachment from and involvement in the family is mirrored by the director Michael Mayer's expert staging, as he moves in and out of remembered scenes, alternately commenting on and participating in their chaos. (11/23/98) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Snakebit—A drama by the actor and first-time playwright David Marshall Grant, staged by Naked Angels. (Grove Street Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 479-7304. Closes Dec. 4.)

Spalding Gray—The monologuist returns to P.S. 122 with a work in progress. Continues, Mondays only, through Dec. 21. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Swan Lake—The British choreographer Matthew Bourne's thrilling, iconoclastic version of the Tchaikovsky ballet takes the story of the troubled Prince who falls in love with a swan out of the realm of the folkloric and into the realm of Freudian nightmare, where obsession substitutes for enchantment. The simple but profound exchange of male for female swans sweeps away in one stroke the hidebound froufrou of the traditional version and releases enormous energy into the music. (10/19/98) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)



CATHERINE LAZURE

"'Hope' Is the Thing with Feathers," by Frank Pugliese, at Greenwich House.

Symphonie Fantastique—Abstract puppets underwater, set to the music of Berlioz. A peerless, delightful evening. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

This Is Our Youth—Kenneth Lonergan's highly praised comedy about postadolescent heartbreak, set on the Upper West Side in 1982. His characters are meant to be the by-products of a morally bankrupt culture: they have money, they have a certain raggedy charm, and they can muster a kind of vocabulary. What they don't have in life is a reason to be; what they don't have onstage is a way of compelling our attention. Lonergan, whose script shows real theatrical promise, is good on surface behavior but not on subtext. Everything that is psychologically important happens offstage. Mark Brokaw is the director. (11/23/98) (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103. Closes Dec. 6.)

Trainspotting—Harry Gibson's 1994 adaptation of Irvine Welsh's novel about a group of Edinburgh junkies. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 239-6200.)

Waiting for Godot—Christopher Lloyd, Tony Shalhoub, John Turturro, and Richard Spore take on Beckett's tragicomedy. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

Wit—Margaret Edson's funny, diamond-sharp first play manages to yoke together Donne's "Holy Sonnets" and ovarian cancer to make an original drama about the dignity of the spirit and the failure of modern medicine. Kathleen Chalfant, as the feisty English professor with only two hours to live and so many acid jokes to tell, gives one helluva fine performance. (MCC Theatre, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765.)

The Women of Orleans—Kristin Marting's play, set in post-Civil War New Orleans, focusses on the lives and love affairs of four women from different backgrounds. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

Zora Neale Hurston—A drama about the black American novelist, folklorist, and playwright. Written by Laurence Holder. Elizabeth Van Dyke has the title role. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

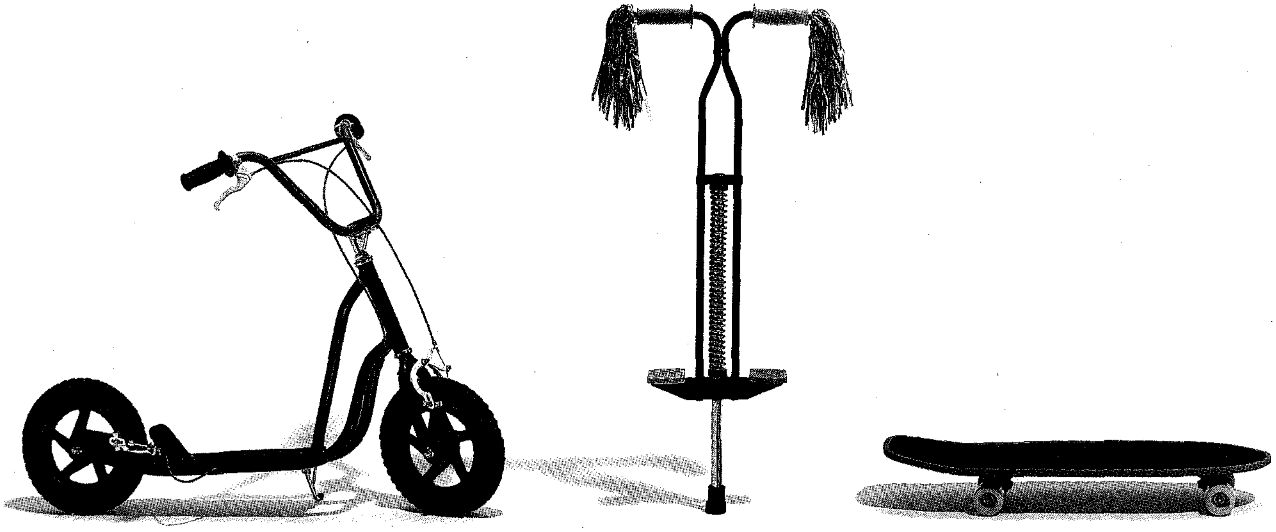
LONG RUNS

ART: Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **DINAH WAS:** Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **NUNSENSE A-MEN:** 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **POWER PLAYS:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **R & J:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE SOUND OF MUSIC:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **VISITING MR. GREEN:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.

DANCE

New York City Ballet—For its fiftieth-anniversary season, the company promises surprise appearances by former N.Y.C.B. greats scattered like sugarplums throughout its run of "The Nutcracker." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Dec. 2-3, Dec. 8-10, and Dec. 15 at 6; Dec. 4 and Dec. 11 at 8; Dec. 5 and Dec. 12 at 2 and 8; and Dec. 6 and Dec. 13 at 1 and 5. Through Jan. 3.)

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre—Dec. 2 at 7, a gala performance: "The Prodigal Prince" and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 3 at 8: "Slaves," "Bad Blood," and "The Stack-Up." . . . ¶ Dec. 4 at 8: "Polish Pieces," "Cry," the première of Judith Jamison's "Echo: Far from Home," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 5 at 2: "The Prodigal Prince," "Bad Blood," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 5 at 8: "The Prodigal Prince," "Echo: Far from Home," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 6 at 3: "Slaves," "Bad Blood," and "The Stack-Up." . . . ¶ Dec. 6 at 7:30: "The Prodigal Prince" and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 8 at 8: "Memoria," "Episodes," and "Hymn." . . . ¶ Dec. 9 at 8: "Streams," "Cry," the première of Redha's "Lettres d'Amour," and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 10 at 8: "Streams," "Lettres d'Amour," and "Slaves." . . . ¶ Dec. 11 at 8: "Episodes," the premières of two works by



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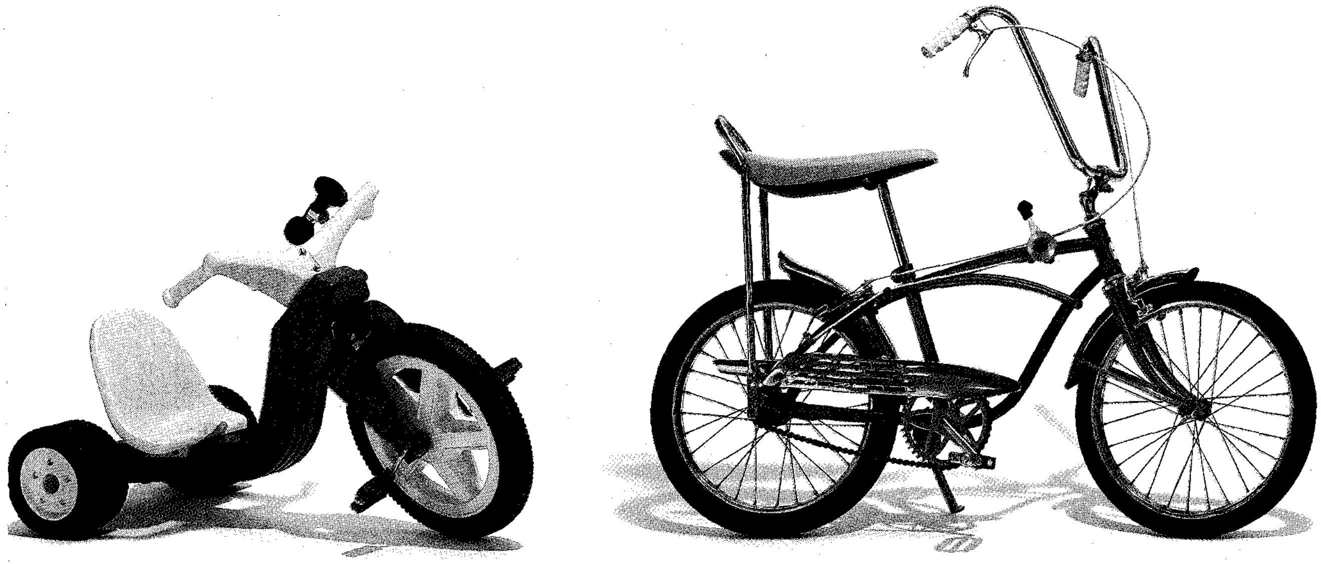

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HONDA
Thinking.

company members (Lisa Johnson's "Restricted" and Troy O'Neill Powell's "Ascension"), and "Revelations." . . . ¶ Dec. 12 at 2: "Memoria," "Restricted," "Ascension," and "Revelations." . . ¶ Dec. 12 at 8: "Suite Otis," "Episodes," and "Revelations." . . ¶ Dec. 13 at 3: "Suite Otis," "Lettres d'Amour," and "The Stack-Up." . . ¶ Dec. 13 at 7:30: "Streams," "Cry," "Echo: Far from Home," and "Revelations." . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 8: A medley of classic Ailey works. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Through Jan. 3.)

Ballett Frankfurt—The choreographer William Forsythe and his twenty-six-member company present "Eidos: Telos." (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Dec. 2-4 at 7:30, Dec. 5 at 2 and 7:30, and Dec. 6 at 3.)

Ballet Hispanico—The company premières "Bury Me Standing," a work by Catalonian choreographer Ramon Oller, and presents repertory work by Ann Reinking, David Rousseve, and Maria Rovira. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Dec. 1 at 7:30, Dec. 2-4 and Dec. 8-11 at 8, Dec. 5 and Dec. 12 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 6 and Dec. 13 at 2 and 7:30.)

Improvisation Festival/NY—The annual fortnight of fearless and (more or less) spontaneous choreography keeps dancegoers moving, naturally, with performances (and, often, contact jams) at Danspace Project (Dec. 1, Dec. 3-4, and Dec. 6 at 8:30; 674-8194), the Knitting Factory (Dec. 5-6 at 2 and 2:45; 477-5288), Context Studios (Dec. 4 at noon, Dec. 5 at 8, and Dec. 13 at 1; 353-1888), P.S. 122 (Dec. 6 at 4; 477-5288), Washington Square United Methodist Church (Dec. 10-12 at 8; 477-6635), and Movement Research at Judson Church (Dec. 7 at 8; 477-6635). For schedule and address information, call the festival hot line at 718-783-7959.

"The Remember Project"—Twelve hours of performances from more than seventy performers and ensembles, with proceeds benefitting Dancers Responding to AIDS. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. For more information, call 840-0770. Dec. 5, from noon to midnight.)

"Makeshift Dancing"—The choreographer Wendy Rogers presents solos, duets, and trios. (Danspace Project. 674-8194. Dec. 10-13 at 8:30.)

Split Stream—A pair of programs in Dance Theatre Workshop's two-performer series. Dec. 3-4 and Dec. 12 at 8 and Dec. 13 at 3: Jeanine Durning and Terry Hollis. . . . ¶ Dec. 5 and Dec. 10-11 at 8 and Dec. 6 at 3: Yasmeen Godder and Paulo Henrique. (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

"Splayed Mind Out"—The American choreographer Meg Stuart and her Belgian company Damaged Goods collaborate with the artist Gary Hill. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Dec. 2-5 at 8:30.)

"Romance"—The Butoh soloist Min Tanaka. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Dec. 3-6 at 8:30.)

"Specimens"—Ishmael Houston-Jones and an ad-hoc company that includes the Headlong Dance Theatre, in an evening-length work. (P.S. 122. 477-5288. Dec. 10-13 at 8:30.)

"Starry Night"—The South Korean expatriate Eun Me Ahn and her seven-member company. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 334-7479. Dec. 3-6 at 8.)

"A Night in La Mezcla"—The choreographer Patricia Hofbauer and the writer George Emilio Sanchez present their multilingual vaudeville about split identity. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, south of Houston St. 219-3088. Dec. 4-5 and Dec. 10-12 at 8. Through Dec. 19.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Dave Matthews Band—America's most popular post-Dead party band. With Béla Fleck and the Flecktones. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Dec. 2-3 at 7:30.)

Jazz at Lincoln Center—Trumpeter and musical director Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra return from their world tour for a program of works by Mingus, Ellington, and others. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Dec. 3 and Dec. 5 at 8.)

Billy Joel—He's never mythologized New York the way Bruce Springsteen turned New Jersey into his own Yoknapatawpha County, but Joel has always been a hometown boy. His local gigs have a prodigal-son intensity. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Dec. 5, Dec. 13, and Dec. 15 at 8.)

Sweet Honey in the Rock—The riveting all-female a-cappella group. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Dec. 5 at 8.)

Jazz in the Village—The Sidney Bechet Society presents a pair of jam sessions, with trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, trumpeter Randy Sandke, reedman Joe Temperley, and others. (Theatre at the Greenwich Village Center, 219 Sullivan St. For more information, call 516-627-4468. Dec. 7 at 6 and 8:30.)

"A Singin', Swingin' Christmas"—Pianist and singer Michael Feinstein and a few friends—including vocalist Freddy Cole, pianists Marian McPartland and Jacky Terrasson, and saxophonist Jimmy Heath—ring in the holidays. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Dec. 7 at 8.)

"Swing and Beyond"—Stéphane Grappelli, who died last December, at the age of eighty-nine, was the first and last word in jazz violin since the early thirties, and one of a kind. He combined just the right pinch of Gallic savoir faire with sterling technique, stalwart swing, and a luscious, unforgettable tone. His influence was widespread, a fact attested to at this tribute concert by the presence of violinists from all over the stylistic map: Jean-Luc Ponty (fusion), Mark O'Connor (country), Regina Carter (new jazz), and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg (classical). A few Grappelli regulars, including guitarists Bucky Pizzarelli and Martin Taylor, are also on hand to celebrate the memory of this most charming of string virtuosos. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Dec. 10 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Dec. 9-12: Jazz doesn't want for master pianists, but there's only one **TOMMY FLANAGAN.** Tone, touch, taste, technique; he's got it all in spades. Add to this Flanagan's imaginative repertoire and the alarming unity of his trio, and you have the apogee of the contemporary jazz experience. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Dec. 3-8: The **ELVIN JONES JAZZ MACHINE.** Jones is seventy-one? Somebody produce a birth certificate, because this whirlwind of a drummer is still playing with the energy and imagination of a twenty-five-year-old. Jones should be experienced not merely as a miracle of nature but as the brilliant jazz innovator that he continues to be. Dec. 8-13: Pianist **MC COY TYNER** celebrates his sixtieth birthday (which is Dec. 11) with the help of saxophonist **STANLEY TURRENTINE.** Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through the New Year, the inimitable **BOBBY SHORT.** . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** is in attendance.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—The worthiest guitarist to emerge from the seventies swarm, **JOHN SCOFIELD** (here through Dec. 6) favors tricky, asymmetrical lines over generic flash; where his peers tend to be marathon runners, he's an ambler. The key to his appeal is simple: within this cultivated jazz musician beats the heart of a twisted bluesman. Dec. 8-13: Some fifty years into an unassuming yet brilliant career, pianist **HANK JONES** has become a contemporary version of his early model, Teddy Wilson: each silken phrase is guaranteed to be perfect in form and diction. But Jones's ambition and repertoire continue to expand. He's long practiced an elegant mélange of pre-swing, swing, and bop phraseology, and his continuing collaboration with younger play-

TABLES FOR TWO

Quilty's, 177 Prince St. (254-1260)—At the dawning of the century in New York, men gathered at clubhouse "beefsteaks," where they sat on crates and ate chops with their bare hands; ladies were relegated to tearooms, to dine on finger sandwiches. Today, men still gather for steak, at places like Gage and Tollner (where they're required to eat with utensils), and women may go there too, if they please. But for the modern girls' night out, Quilty's is an especially good idea.

Chef Katy Sparks strikes a balance between the carnal and the civil in ways that can assuage a woman's lingering sense of culinary disenfranchisement without assaulting her more delicate sensibilities. In other words, you can tuck into some serious food here without that Neanderthal-around-the-fire feeling. Sparks is brave, unafraid of game, but she treats it as though it's been seduced rather than shot. Her roasted loin of venison, for instance, is served with a fox-grape poivrade, black-trumpet mushrooms, and cauliflower gratin—things you might actually feed to a deer if you weren't planning on killing it instead. And she gives lighter dishes extra muscle without getting too chest-bangy about it: her salmon is roasted in parchment with a simple stew of wild mushrooms, Kabocha squash, and leeks, and her grilled marinated quail is served with spiced quince and walnut spaetzle. *Spaetzle.* What more do you need to know?

The SoHo setting is as deceptively civilized as the food; four women installed at the crisply appointed table in the front bay window, which is separated from the bar by an elegant Chinese-wallpaper screen, may plunder the menu and have their way with the terrific wine list, looking, from the street, like nothing more than ladies making polite conversation at tea. But Quilty's is not a "chick restaurant," by any means: a man who is not satisfied with a plate of Sparks's cider-braised Toulouse goose is a man who, if left unattended, will probably consume Beanee Weenees. He's better left at home. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays for lunch, Saturdays and Sundays for brunch, and daily for dinner. Entrées $19.50-$29.)

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ers is proof of his commitment to stay on his toes. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.** Dining.

Lenox Lounge, 288 Lenox Ave., between 124th and 125th Sts. (427-0253)—Dec. 4-5: **CHARLES DAVIS,** the voluble baritone saxophonist, has also been heard acquitting himself quite admirably on the tenor and soprano horns. In working with everyone from Billie Holiday and Ben Webster to Steve Lacy and Abdullah Ibrahim, Davis has soaked up the kind of on-the-bandstand knowledge that you just can't buy. The **SMOKER'S UNION** (Dec. 11-12) generates contemporary hard bop from a compact combination of vital veterans (pianist **JOHN HICKS,** bassist **MICKEY BASS**) and aggressive younger players (alto saxophonist **JUSTIN ROBINSON** and drummer **ERIC ALLEN**).

Tonic, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—The full-throated clarinet virtuoso **DAVID KRAKAUER** brings his **KLEZMER MADNESS** to this former kosher winery on Dec. 6 and Dec. 13.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—At its peak in the mid-eighties, the coöperative band **SPHERE** (here through Dec. 6) performed seamlessly, like a dream. Pianist Kenny Barron, tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Buster Williams, and drummer Ben Riley played with grace and nuance—as if the very survival of those jazz qualities were at stake. Sphere disbanded when Rouse died, in 1988, but this reunion holds much promise. In a wise move, Rouse's spot has been offered to an alto saxophonist, the incomparable Gary Bartz. Dec. 8-13: While not exactly the contemporary versions of Lester Young and Billie Holiday, tenor saxophonist **HOUSTON PERSON** and vocalist **ETTA JONES** make fetching music together, a tradition that started more than twenty-five years ago. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Dec. 2-5: The jazz clarinet has been injected with new life by virtuosos like Ken Peplowski and Marty Ehrlich, but the standard remains **KENNY DAVERN.** For forty years he's tapped into the spirits of licorice-stick iconoclasts such as Pee Wee Russell by tempering a quirky individualism with sterling technique. He's accompanied here by a superior ensemble including pianist **JOHN BUNCH,** bassist **GREG COHEN,** and drummer **TONY DI NICOLA.**

ROCK, ETC.

Arlene Grocery, 95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—Dec. 11: The minimalist art rock of **GIANT FINGERS.**

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Dec. 2: Former Traffic members **DAVE MASON** and **JIM CAPALDI.** Dec. 3-4: For hard-core fans only. The King Crimson rhythm section of **BILL BRUFORD** and **TONY LEVIN** joins forces with former Paul Simon trumpeter **CHRIS BOTTI** and avant-jazz guitarist **DAVID TORN.** Dec. 11: The jazz guitar-and-vocal duo **TUCK & PATTI.**

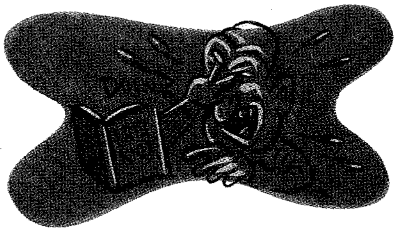
Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Dec. 2: **FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS** play dance music in punk clothing. Dec. 7: Former Lone Justice vocalist **MARIA MC KEE,** a singer whose incendiary voice suggested such monikers as the Next Janis Joplin, never quite arrived as a solo artist. All the more reason to see her in a small club: after the hype, she may be one of the most barn-burning performers to never hit the big time. Dec. 14: **SAINT ETIENNE,** the great English disco band admired for its gossamer hybrid of fey keyboard and dance-floor ballast, spins its heavenly strobe light. Dec. 15: **RUFUS WAINWRIGHT,** whose folk intensity is genetically driven: his parents are Loudon Wainwright III and Kate McGarrigle.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Dec. 3: Perhaps the first neo-swing group to actually sell records, the **SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS** offer a tongue-in-cheek homage to the big-band pantheon. With the Ramones officially retired, the boys of **ANTHRAX** (Dec. 4) have become New York's premier punk godfathers, and they still bust heads with consummate professionalism. Dec. 5: **GOLDEN SMOG,** a lo-fi indie-rock supergroup, featur-

BOOK CURRENTS

Laughing Matters

As hard as it is to get a laugh with well-massaged jokes, silly walks, and goofy drawings, it can be even harder to get one with the written word. This year various authors have made verbal high jinks look almost as easy as pie in the face.



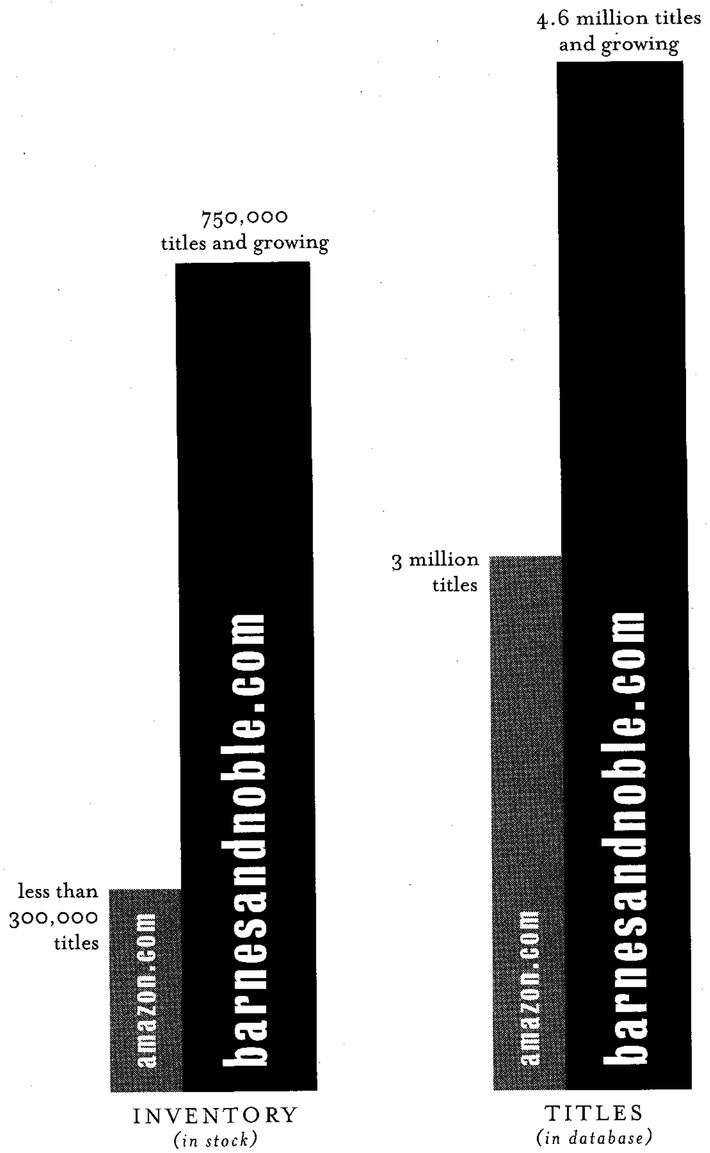
DOUG ALLEN

Helen Fielding's **Bridget Jones's Diary** (Viking) is the now famous dishevelled daybook of a young Englishwoman who struggles to take charge of her career, her vices, her mother, and her panty hose. When her parents' friends ask how her love life is going, Bridget reflects that her honest answer would be "Actually, last night my married lover appeared wearing suspenders and a darling little Angora crop-top, told me he was gay / a sex addict / a narcotic addict / a commitment phobic and beat me up with a dildo." All she says, though, is "Fine."

About a Boy (Riverhead), written by Fielding's compatriot Nick Hornby, shows why Bridget has such trouble finding a mate. Hornby's hero, Will Lightman, trawls single-parent groups in search of weary women who will date him without commitment. What he finds is a twelve-year-old boy whose need for guidance forces Will to grow up.

Closer to home, the Southern humorist Roy Blount, Jr., provides a rueful, blame-free account of his dysfunctional life in **Be Sweet** (Knopf). He stokes his memoir with Twainish insights and absurdist episodes that evoke Buster Keaton. On one occasion, he wakes up in a hotel, pads to the bathroom, and notices in the mirror "a big, thick gout of dried blood" in the middle of his forehead. "For the life of me, I couldn't remember having been shot," he writes. Switching on the light, he realizes "it wasn't blood. I had just slept on my complimentary mint."

New Yorker Jonathan Ames delivers a more urbane confection called **The Extra Man** (Scribner), in which an impecunious East Coaster named Louis Ives dreams of becoming a proper young gentleman. In reality, he shares squalid digs with an aging roué and tries on ladies' lingerie in his free time. Still, Louis does seem a little like Bertie Wooster—if you can imagine Bertie with a yen for Aunt Agatha's knickers.



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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing Jeff Tweedy (Wilco), Dan Murphy (Soul Asylum), and Jody Stephens (Big Star). Unlike its spiritual forefathers in Anthrax, **OFFSPRING** (Dec. 8) favors melody over muscle. The band can whip up a mosh pit like few others, but it always leaves even the most tattooed throwbacks humming. Dec. 11: **BILLY BRAGG** reinterprets the songs of Woody Guthrie, often with unexpectedly sweet results. With slide guitarist **COREY HARRIS**.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Dec. 9: New York City's feral rock-and-roll animal, **LOU REED**.

Life, 158 Bleecker St. (420-1999)—Dec. 2: **MARTHA DAVIS AND THE MOTELS**. One of the classiest bands to emerge from the New Wave era, the Motels, led by sultry lead singer Davis, projected a Germanic poutiness long before it was fashionable. The band has long been out of commission, so one hopes that this unexpected appearance will be more than a nostalgia trip. With Davis onstage, there's reason enough to check in for the evening.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Dec. 6: The sophisticated pop of **ELYSIAN FIELDS**. Dec. 12: The lyrical, winsome songs of **THE OCEAN BLUE**.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Dec. 3: Bluegrass legend **RALPH STANLEY**. Dec. 4: The vaudevillian hardcore of **FISHBONE**. Dec. 5: Legendary groovemeisters the **FUNKY METERS**. Dec. 9: Hardcore rap with **OUTKAST** and the **BLACK EYED PEAS**. Dec. 12: Psychobilly drill sergeant **REVEREND HORTON HEAT** makes the crowd do musical pushups.

Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—Dec. 3: **SPIRITUALIZED**, one of the best English bands you've never heard of, specializes in neo-psychedelic dream pop.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Edgar Degas, Photographer." The influence of photography on Impressionist painting has long been established; here Degas seems to be returning the favor, exploiting avant-gardist, painterly effects in the mechanical medium. Through Jan. 3. . . . ¶ "Donato Creti: Melancholy and Perfection" showcases an early-eighteenth-century painter (1671-1749), the last in a line of Bolognese classicists. Through Jan. 31. . . . ¶ "Charles Burchfield from the Collection," a survey of the museum's holdings of this great, eccentric American painter (1893-1967), which have been enriched by some spectacular recent acquisitions. The most dramatic of these, "October in the Woods," is a huge watercolor of craggy pines in a clearing, painted on eight carefully joined sheets. Like much of Burchfield's best work, it evokes a child's perspective on nature, alive with fluttering, euphoric presences. Through Feb. 28. . . . ¶ "Félix Vallotton: Woodcuts and Three Paintings." Through Feb. 21. . . . ¶ "Mary Cassatt: Drawings and Prints in the Met," a selection of more than fifty works on paper from the museum's collections. Through Jan. 24. . . . ¶ "From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in the Metropolitan Museum." Through Jan. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Jackson Pollock," a comprehensive retrospective—the first in the United States since 1967—of the artist many regard as the most influential American painter of this century. It would be hard to fault the installation or the choice of works: in addition to many smaller drawings and canvases, the Modern has secured all of the major large pictures, from the mural that Peggy Guggenheim commissioned for her foyer in 1943 to the late "Blue Poles" (1952). Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ In conjunction with the Pollock show, the drawings department has gathered some eighty works by New York School artists, from early Abstract Expressionist stuff by the young Rothko and Gorky to mature work by Rauschenberg and Johns. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ "New Photography: Jeanne Dunning, Olafur Eliasson, Rachel Harrison, Sam Taylor-Wood," the fourteenth installment of the museum's survey series. Through Jan. 12. . . . "Focus: Pollock and Printmaking." Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ "Dubuffet to de Kooning: Expressionist Prints from Europe and America." Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ "Structure and Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles." Through Jan. 26. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Rendezvous: Masterpieces from the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Guggenheim Museums" includes works by Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Kandinsky, and other modern masters. The joint exhibition allows side-by-side presentation of pieces that are usually separated by a transatlantic flight. Through Jan. 24. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"Premises," a spectacular disaster in which two mediocre exhibitions (one of postwar French architecture, the other of postwar French installation and performance art) collide, to the benefit of neither. Through Jan. 10. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The first full-scale retrospective of the work of Bob Thompson. Through Jan. 3. . . . ¶ An exhibition of fifty-two Brice Marden drawings from the museum's collection includes large-scale works and small sketches from the artist's workbook. Through March 28. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou" presents an astonishing array of objects—dolls, flags, rattles, pots, calabashes, medicine packets, paintings—more than five hundred in all, which bring to life the vivid history and practice of the Afro-Caribbean religion. Through Jan. 3. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch" offers some hundred large-scale court and religious paintings, manuscripts, and enamels done in the representational style that flourished under the dynasty that ruled Iran from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Through Jan. 24. . . . ¶ "Japonism in Fashion: Japan Dresses the West." Through Feb. 14. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturday, Dec. 5, 11 to 9; Saturday, Dec. 12, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. (288-0700)—"Victorian Fairy Painting" presents canvases that indulge the Romantic taste for naturalistic renderings of intricate fantasy worlds, by such masters of the genre as Richard Dadd, Joseph Noël Paton, and John Anster Fitzgerald. Through Jan. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

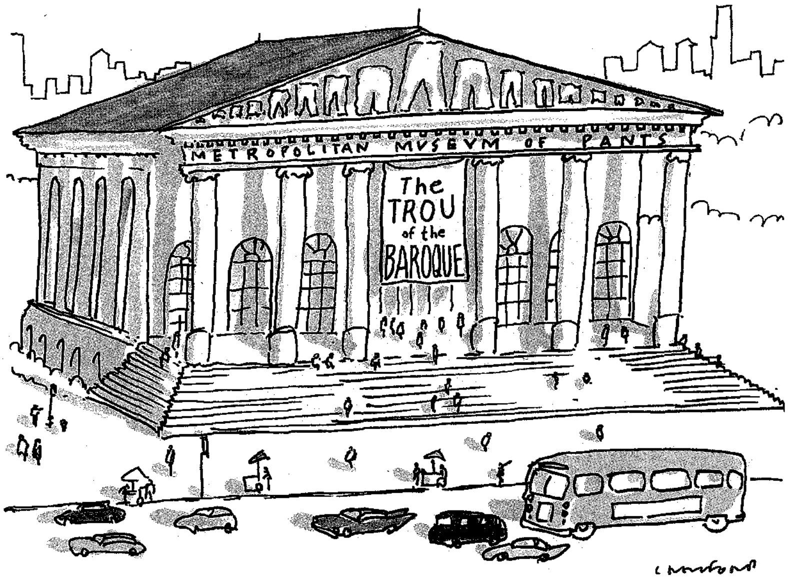
(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

DeWitt Godfrey—Godfrey calls his show "A Sculpture and a Drawing," and, sure enough, that's what it is: one fifty-foot drawing (a sort of chaotic family tree) and one two-and-a-half-ton sculpture, a cylinder of Corten-steel strips riveted together, producing an effect that is both louche and butch, like a giant Azzedine Alaïa dress. The big sproingy thing slumps down the center of the gallery, so the only way to look at it is to walk on top of it, down the middle, Red Sea-style. One had stopped expecting much of anything from monumental sculpture, but this work, like Richard Serra's "Torqued Ellipses," proves wry and surprising. Through Dec. 24. (The Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St. 879-3500.)

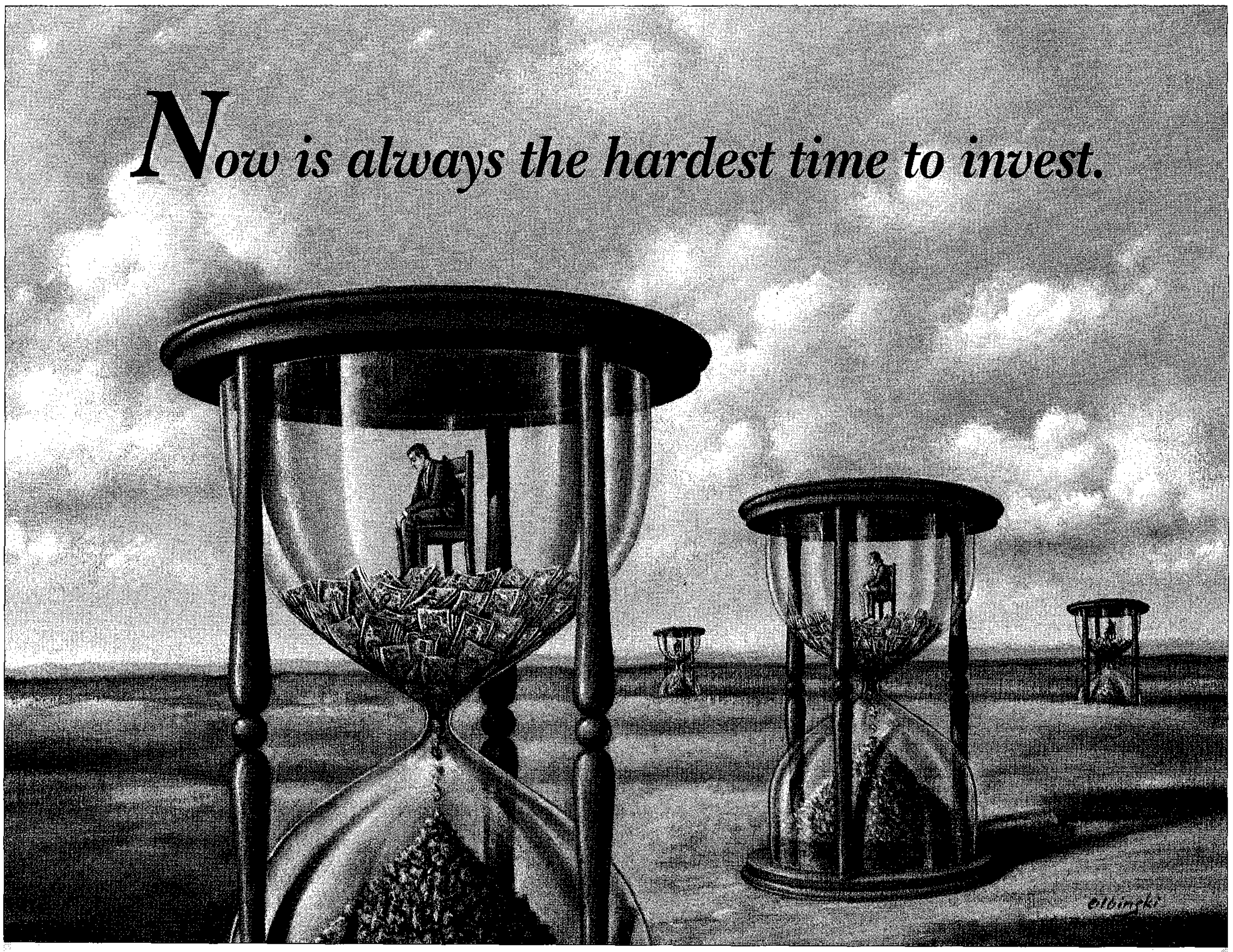
Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945)—A scholarly, beautiful exhibition that pairs forty of the artist's haunting prints with works by artists who influenced her, ranging from Rembrandt and Millet to Ernst Barlach and Max Klinger. Kollwitz was a feminist, but in other respects—her melodramatic populism, revolutionary zeal, and love of tradition—it's hard to imagine an artist more at odds with the concerns of the downtown art world. Through Dec. 31. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. 245-6734.)

Jacob Lawrence—A suite of twelve new gouache paintings of carpenters at work, a theme that has fascinated the artist since the forties. Painted in sweet, bright, interlocking colors, Lawrence's images of peaceful collaboration are the visual equivalent of old lefty folk songs: try as you might to find their idealism cloying, you end up humming along. Through Dec. 30. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111.)

John Moore—Radiant, intricate views of Tel Aviv, by a painter who is best known for his cityscapes of Boston and Philadelphia. Moore loves urban sprawl, and he paints it with an almost hallucinatory clarity. The sort of complicated vista we take in at a glance all the time and ignore—boxy apartment blocks, bedraggled palm trees, aisles of rooftops and parked cars—becomes, in his



MICHAEL CRAWFORD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hands, as luminous and stately as a Mondrian. Through Dec. 31. (Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810.)

George Nick—Sun-drenched storefronts and antique cars, painted with high-speed virtuosity. Though he's in his seventies, Nick paints like a child prodigy: everything gleams, sparkles, and dazzles. Not just the old cars, but lawns, awnings, pavements—the whole world—seem to have been waxed and polished. Through Dec. 19. (Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345.)

Short List—**steven assael,** Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545. Through Jan. 9. . . . **ross bleckner,** Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929. Through Dec. 19; see also Downtown Short List. . . . **charles burchfield,** Kennedy, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 541-9600. Through Dec. 31. . . . **waltercio caldas,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470. Through Jan. 16. . . . **willem de kooning,** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400. Through Dec. 19; see also Chelsea and Downtown Short Lists. . . . **gary t. erbe,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. 644-8300. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through Jan. 16. . . . **john marin,** York, 21 E. 65th St. 772-9155. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through Jan. 8. . . . **gabriel orozco,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Open Mondays; through Jan. 9. . . . **sigmar polke,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. 988-1623. Through Jan. 16. . . . **lucas samaras,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through Jan. 2. . . . **ena swansea,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through Dec. 24.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Monique Prieto—Medium- and large-scale abstract paintings by a leading figure among the new group of color-field painters. The artist's slack blobs of color rest uneasily one above the other; her color combinations and compositions avoid conventional elegance (very much an issue with the color-fielders of yore), but they're pleasing anyway. Through Dec. 23. (Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366.)

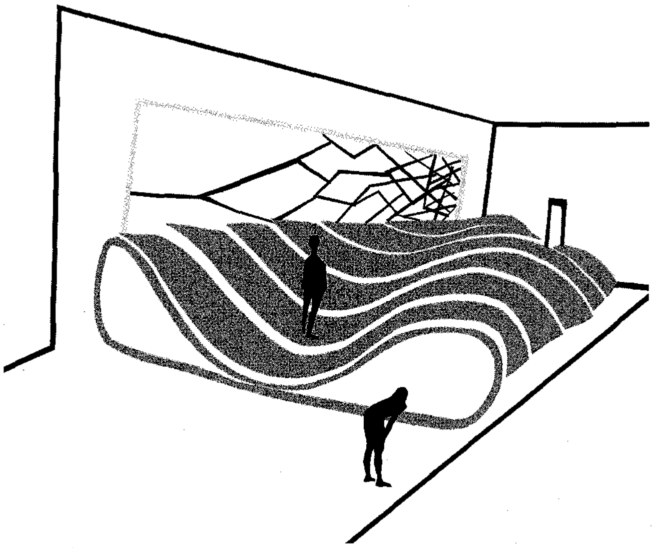
James Turrell—Four meticulously crafted installations by a leading Light and Space artist. The Magnatron series features hearth-like wall apertures that emit a strange flickering glow (in fact, it's the reflection of hidden television sets). Turrell's luminous austerity recalls Rothko's, but without the melancholy; instead, these pieces project a sobering (even tranquillizing), Quaker-like calm. Through Dec. 23. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300.)

Short List—**doug aitken,** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121. Through Jan. 16. . . . **francis bacon, louise bourgeois,** and **franz xaver messerschmidt,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. All shows through Dec. 31. . . . **michael bevilacqua,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through Jan. 16. . . . **willem de kooning,** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through Dec. 19. . . . **thornton dial,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Jan. 16. . . . **felix gonzalez-torres,** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000. Through Jan. 16. . . . **suzanne joelson,** Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through Dec. 19. . . . **ross knight,** Team, 527 W. 26th St. 279-9219. Through Dec. 19. . . . **reinhard mucha,** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100. Through Jan. 9. . . . **jacques roch,** Foster, 529 W. 20th St. 966-9024. Through Dec. 31. . . . **shirley wiitasalo** and **moira dryer,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Both shows through Jan. 23.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

John Baldessari—"The Commissioned Paintings 1969," an exhibition that reunites early and important works by this first-generation Conceptualist. Previously, Baldessari had asked sign painters to execute his pictures; in this series, he turned to artists exhibiting at county fairs. For the slide images from which these artists would work, Baldessari asked a friend to point out various things he found interesting. The resulting paintings embody both a joke about and a critique of connoisseurship. Some paintings are dry and laconic, while others turned out more florid and expressive. Almost thirty years later, the works still convey some of the weirdness and surprise of the opening volleys of conceptual art. Through Dec. 19. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. 966-6160.)

Kim MacConnel—Fifty sketchbook pages and an assortment of new paintings that mix figuration, abstraction, and photography. MacConnel's peppy aesthetic, as full of polka dots and kitschy animals as a beach towel, remains defiantly lightweight. "C'mon, loosen up," the paintings seem to urge, but the haphazard imagery doesn't offer much incentive. Through Dec. 23. (Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777.)



An exhibition called "A Sculpture and a Drawing," by Dewitt Godfrey, at the Sculpture Center.

KIM DEMARCO

Suzanne McClelland—Appealingly cryptic paintings that incorporate words and phrases. In one of the smallest, the word "boo" floats like a miniature houseboat down a brushy, muddy river. In the largest work, "ENOUGH" is painted backward and forward in bright pink and occupies the walls of an enormous room. These images snuggle into your imagination like anxiety dreams. Through Dec. 31. (Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219.)

"The Choice"—An artists'-pick exhibition—works by twenty-five unknown or unrepresented artists were selected by the likes of Cindy Sherman, Damien Hirst, Nicole Eisenman, and Robert Gober. It's a great idea, but the results prove that artists aren't any more discriminating than art dealers. Through Jan. 2. (Exit Art, 548 Broadway. 966-7745. Open Friday and Saturday evenings until 8.)

"Lot/Ek"—For "TV Tank," the Italian architectural team of Ada Tolla and Giuseppe Lignano sliced a thirty-five-foot tank of an oil truck into eight ring-shaped compartments, each fitted with a television set. Impressively vast and well crafted, this installation aims for a kind of hollow irony and achieves it. Through Jan. 2. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

Short List—**francis bacon,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300. Through Jan. 16. . . . **ross bleckner,** Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753. Through Dec. 19. . . . **richard cleaver,** Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. 431-4224. Through Jan. 9. . . . **willem de kooning,** The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166. Through Dec. 19. . . . **kim dingle,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through Dec. 19. . . . **dinh q. lê,** P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Through Dec. 23. . . . **susan norrie,** Hoffman, 429 West Broadway. 966-6676. Through Jan. 2. . . . **adrian piper,** Erben, 476 Broome St. 966-5283. Through Jan. 16. . . . **annelies štrba,** Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. 966-9520. Through Dec. 19. . . . **andy warhol,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828. Through Jan. 9.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—Dec. 2: Native American art. . . . ¶ Dec. 3: American paintings, drawings, and sculptures, mostly nineteenth-century and Impressionist. . . . ¶ Dec. 4: Lalique collectibles; also, an arcade sale of paintings, decorative pieces, and furniture in the Art Nouveau and Art Deco styles. . . . ¶ Dec. 5: Lamps, vases, and other pieces by Louis Comfort Tiffany. . . . ¶ Dec. 9: Set and costume designs for opera and ballet productions; also, a benefit auction of handbags and luggage. . . . ¶ Dec. 9-10: Jewelry. . . . ¶ Dec. 11: Vintage movie posters. . . . ¶ Dec. 12: Antique toys and games. . . . ¶ Dec. 15: Books, manuscripts, and printed Americana (including many Presidential items). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Christie's—Dec. 3: Sporting art. . . . ¶ Dec. 4: Wines. . . . ¶ Dec. 8: Jewelry. . . . ¶ Dec. 9: Books and manuscripts. . . . ¶ Dec. 9-10: Twentieth-century decorative art, including Tiffany creations. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

Phillips—Dec. 7: Twentieth-century decorative art. . . . ¶ Dec. 13: Jewelry, including a hundred loose diamonds. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830.)

Doyle—Dec. 2: American paintings and sculptures. . . . ¶ Dec. 3: Jewelry. . . . ¶ Dec. 9: Jewelry, watches, silverware, and coins. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

Antiquorum—The Geneva-based auction house visits New York this month to hold sales of watches and jewelry. (Park Lane Hotel, 36 Central Park S. Dec. 15. For information, call 750-1103.)

Christmas Antiques Show—A bit of everything. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Dec. 9-13. For information, call 472-1180.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Virginia Beahan & Laura McPhee—"No Ordinary Land," a dozen meditative, often mesmerizing color landscapes of places ranging from a burned-out foundation of a home in the Santa Monica Mountains to a verdant tea plantation dotted with flame trees in Sri Lanka. Through Dec. 23. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220.)

"Camera Work"—Photogravures from Stieglitz's legendary turn-of-the-century journal by, among others, Steichen, Käsebier, Coburn, and Strand. Through Jan. 7. (Platinum, 551 W. 22nd St. 352-0070.)

"The Cultured Tourist"—Travel photographs made since the seventies alongside pictures from the nineteenth century, including works by Michel Auder, Lynn Davis, Vik Muniz, Beat Streuli, Tseng Kwong Chi, Felice Beato, Bisson Frères, and Carleton Watkins. Through Dec. 19. (Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450.)

"The Edge of Night"—Landscape photography from New York, Los Angeles, and Tokyo, by Richard Rothman, Catherine Opie, and Tokihiro Sato. Through Dec. 12. (Leubsdorf gallery, Hunter College, 68th St. and Lexington Ave. 772-4991. Open Mondays through Saturdays, 1 to 6.)

"Images of Miles"—Black-and-white photographs of the trumpeter, by William Gottlieb, Herb Snitzer, Chuck Stewart, and Lee Tanner, among others. Through Jan. 10.

Advertisement

THE LAB OF LUXURY

The next time you go to the post office, if you see a "Wanted" poster with a picture of a black Labrador retriever on it, he's probably mine.

His name is Walter, and he has a wit, charm and personality that could probably land him his own talk show, should he be so inclined. But he has one character flaw: He's a thief.

Befitting his breed, he's always retrieved with a tireless energy bordering on obsession. But lately his retrieving has gone beyond tennis balls and authorized socks. It's more like Grand Theft—Shoe.

I should have known something was up when two or three copies of the same morning paper would appear on the lawn. I thought the paper carrier was just taking a mulligan. I didn't realize my own dog was swiping them from my now news-deprived neighbors.

He returned from a brief burst of freedom the other day, triumphantly toting one of those expensive European wooden sandals. I surmised he had stolen it off a neighbor's deck. He beamed like he'd found a Nobel Prize.

I loaded Labrador and his loot into my new Catera, intending to drive through the neighborhood to find a deck with one shoe, or worse, a neighbor wearing just one. I quickly forgot my mission. The driving was just too much fun.

THE NEWS
TRIBUNE

I had read about all the features in a newspaper ad: 200-horsepower V6 with multi-ram induction, speed-sensitive steering, traction control, on and on. But they didn't mean much until I felt them behind the wheel. My drive around the block took me way out in the country and back.

It seems odd to pass other luxury cars on two-lane highways when you're not really in a hurry to begin with. Something about Catera makes you do it anyway. Walter smiled the whole way.

As luck would have it, on my way back up my street, I spied a neighbor searching his yard, sporting the other sandal in his hand and a puzzled look.

He was less interested in my explanation than in having a long discussion about my new Catera, repeatedly asking questions about feature after feature while running his hand across the leather seating areas.†

I asked if he'd seen the newspaper ad; he had not. He said his papers kept disappearing from his lawn. Walter and I took the Fifth.

Now, all I need is to find a support group for canine kleptomaniacs. Preferably, one that's some distance from here. I won't mind the drive.

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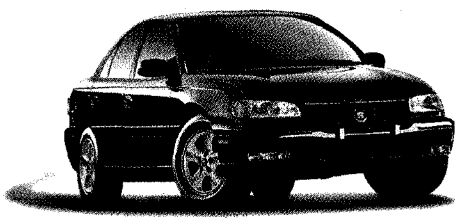

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(Jazz Gallery, 290 Hudson St., at Spring St. 242-1063. Opens at 1; open Sundays.)

"Pioneers of Soviet Photography, 1918-1939"—Works by Alexander Rodchenko, Max Alpert, Georgi Zelma, Dmitri Debanov, and Ivan Shagin. Through Dec. 31. (Schickler, 560 Broadway. 431-6363.)

International Center of Photography—"Bruce Davidson: The Brooklyn Gang, 1959." Through March 7. . . . ¶ "Intimate City: The Photographs of Thomas Roma." Through March 7. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Man Ray: Photography and Its Double," a large show of works from the artist's archives, which are housed at the Pompidou Center, in Paris. Through Jan. 24. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Short List—**ANSEL ADAMS,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through Dec. 5. . . . **LYNN DAVIS,** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through Jan. 16. . . . **PHILIP-LORCA DI CORCIA,** Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224. Through Jan. 16. . . . **JOHN DUGDALE,** Wessel and O'Connor, 242 W. 26th St. 242-8811. Open Sundays; through Jan. 3. . . . **LYNN GEESAMAN,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Through Jan. 9. . . . **LARRY GIANETTINO,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Jan. 16. . . . **JAN GROOVER** and **LEE FRIEDLANDER,** Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Both shows through Dec. 31. . . . **KIM IACONO,** Arsenal gallery, Fifth Ave. at 64th St. 360-8163. Open weekdays, 9 to 5; through Dec. 10. . . . **ARTHUR LEIPZIG,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through Dec. 5. . . . **MICK LINDBERG,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through Dec. 5. . . . **ABELARDO MORELL,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through Dec. 5. . . . **AARON SISKIND** and **MARIO GIACOMELLI,** Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Closed Tuesdays; both shows through Dec. 5. *(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art.)*

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330; and for the Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St., 570-3949.)

HOLIDAY MUSIC

Choral Symphony Society and Cantata Singers—Bach's complete "Christmas Oratorio." (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Dec. 6 at 7. Admission by contribution.)

Concordia Orchestra—Performing Ellington's jazzy take on Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker." (Winter Garden, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Dec. 9 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

Concert Royal and Lionheart—James Richman leads the instrumentalists and the male vocal sextet in French Baroque Christmas music. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Dec. 11 at 8.)

Anonymous 4—The women's vocal quartet offers Christmas music and readings from medieval England. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Dec. 13 at 4.)

Western Wind—The vocal ensemble, with actress Tovah Feldshuh, performs a Hanukkah program. (Winter Garden, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Dec. 14 at 12:15. No tickets necessary.)

Handel's "Messiah"—Dec. 11 at 8: The National Chorale. (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . ¶ Dec. 12 at 2 and 8: The Masterwork Chorus. (Carnegie Hall.) . . . ¶ Dec. 14 at 7:30: A sing-along with the West Village Chorale. (St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. For information about tickets, call 570-7301.) . . . ¶ Dec. 15 and Dec. 17 at 7:30: Gerre Hancock directs the St. Thomas Choir of Men and Boys and Concert Royal. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 664-9360.)

OTHER SEASONAL SOUNDS OF INTEREST

NEW YORK TREBLE SINGERS. (Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Fifth Ave. at 55th St. Dec. 4 at 7:30. Admission by contribution.) . . . **NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS.** (Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Central Park W. at 65th St. Dec. 4 at 8 and Dec. 6 at 4. For information about tickets, call 568-5948.) . . . **POLYHYMNIA.** (St. John's In-the-Village, 218 W. 11th St., at Waverly Pl. Dec. 5 at 8. Admission by contribution.) . . . **CHOIR OF ALL SAINTS.** (All Saints Episcopal Church, 230 E. 60th St. Dec. 6 at 3. For information about tickets, call 758-0447.) . . . **GREGG SMITH SINGERS.** (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. Dec. 6 at 3.) . . . **WEST VILLAGE CHORALE.** (St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. Dec. 6 at 7. For information about tickets, call 570-7301.) . . . **JUILLIARD BRASS ENSEMBLE.** (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 7 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.) . . . **CHANTICLEER.** (Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 8-9 at 6:30 and 8:30.) . . . **WESTMINSTER SYMPHONIC CHOIR.** (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 8 at 8.) . . . **GAY GOTHAM CHORUS.** (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 8 at 8.) . . . **RUSSIAN CHAMBER CHORUS OF NEW YORK.** (St. Ignatius Episcopal Church, West End Ave. at 87th St. Dec. 8 at 8. Tickets at the door. . . . ¶ Catholic Center, New York University, 58 Washington Sq. S. Dec. 12 at 4. Tickets at the door.) . . . **VOICES OF ASCENSION.** (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. 254-8553. Dec. 9 at 8.) . . . **GREENWICH VILLAGE SINGERS.** (St. Joseph's Church, 371 Sixth Ave. Dec. 11 at 8. For information about tickets, call 642-8176.) . . . **STONEWALL CHORALE.** (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Dec. 12 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 971-5813.) . . . **ST. JAMES' CHANCEL CHOIR AND FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA.** (St. James' Episcopal Church, Madison Ave. at 71st St. 288-4100. Dec. 13 at 4.) . . . **CHOIRS OF ST. LUKE IN-THE-FIELDS.** (487 Hudson St., at Grove St. Dec. 13 at 4. Tickets at the door.) . . . **BOYS CHOIR OF HARLEM.** (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 13 at 5.) . . . **POMERIUM.** (Medieval Court, Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 13 at 6:30 and 8:30.) . . . **VIENNA CHOIR BOYS.** (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 13 at 7:30.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**CARMEN,** with Hei-Kyung Hong, Wendy White, Gösta Winbergh, and Gregg Baker, conducted by David Robertson. (Dec. 2 at 7:30.) . . . With Ms. Hong, Béatrice Uria-Monzon, Mr. Winbergh, and Gino Quilico; Mr. Robertson. (Dec. 5 and Dec. 8 at 8 and Dec. 12 at 1:30.) . . . **LA BOHÈME,** with Francesca Pedaci, Gwynne Geyer, Frank Lopardo, and Roberto de Candia; Julius Rudel. (Dec. 3 at 7:30.) . . . **LA TRAVIATA,** with Patricia Racette, Marcelo Alvarez, and Vladimir Chernov; James Levine. (Dec. 4 at 8.) . . . With Ainhoa Arteta, Roberto Aronica, and Mr. Chernov; Carlo Rizzi. (Dec. 9 at 8 and Dec. 12 at 8:30.) . . . **LE NOZZE DI FIGARO,** with Felicity Lott, Barbara Bonney, Susanne Mentzer, Bryn Terfel, and Dwayne Croft; Mr. Levine. (Dec. 5 at 1:30.) . . . With Wendy Nielsen, Ms. Bonney, Kristine Jepson, Mr. Terfel, and Mr. Croft; Mr. Rudel. (Dec. 10 at 8.) . . . **LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR,** in the opening performances of a new production, with Ruth Ann Swenson, Ramón Vargas, Roberto Frontali, and Alastair Miles; Mr. Rizzi. (Dec. 7 and Dec. 11 at 8 and Dec. 15 at 7:30.) . . . **DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE,** with Dawn Upshaw, Laura Aikin, Paul Groves, Matthias Goerne, and Franz-Josef Selig; Charles Mackerras. (Dec. 14 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

"Powder Her Face"—An opera by Thomas Adès, in semi-staged concert performances by the Brooklyn Philharmonic, conducted by Robert Spano. (BAM's Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Dec. 8, Dec. 10, and Dec. 12, all at 8.)

"Monsters of Grace"—A digital opera by Philip Glass. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Dec. 9-11 and Dec. 15 at 7:30, Dec. 12 at 2 and 7:30, and Dec. 13 at 3.)

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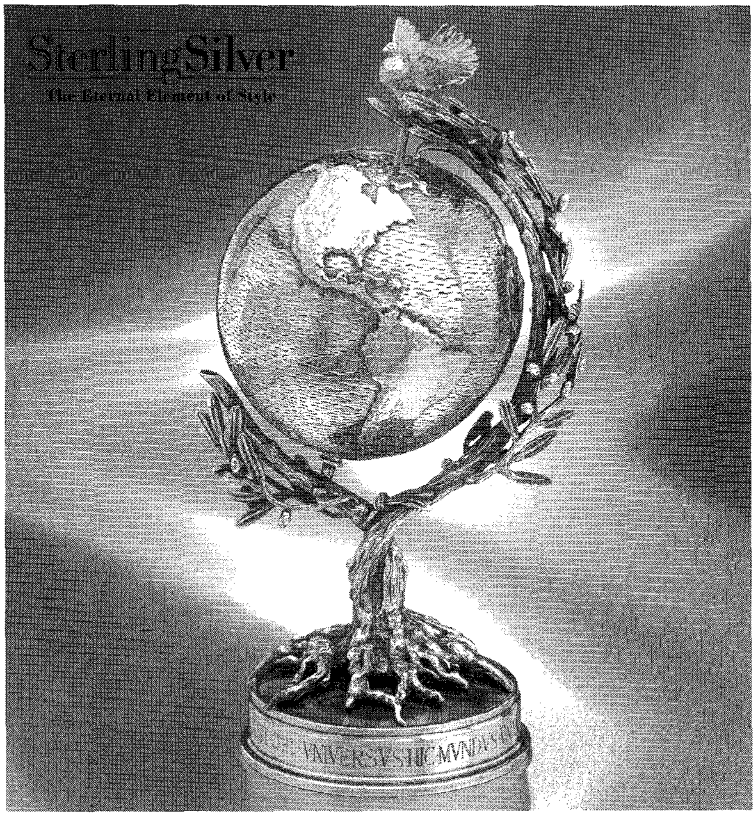

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(Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802, ext. 428. Dec. 9 and Dec. 11 at 8 and Dec. 13 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—At Avery Fisher Hall, Kurt Masur conducting. Dec. 3-5 at 8 and Dec. 8 at 7:30: The orchestra notes the semicentennial of Richard Strauss's death with a program comprising his tone poems "Tod und Verklärung" and "Don Juan," his "Four Last Songs" (with soprano Deborah Voigt), his French Horn Concerto No. 1 (featuring Philip Myers, the orchestra's principal French hornist), and his "Dance of the Seven Veils" (from "Salome"). . . . ¶ Dec. 10 at 8 and Dec. 11 at 11 A.M.: A nine-concert series celebrating the centennial of George Gershwin's birth opens with a program comprising the composer's "Cuban Overture," "Piano Concerto in F" (with André Previn as soloist), and "An American in Paris," plus Robert Russell Bennett's "Porgy and Bess: A Symphonic Picture." . . . ¶ Dec. 12 at 8 and Dec. 15 at 7:30: Gershwin's "Let 'Em Eat Cake" Overture, two works featuring pianist Fazil Say (the Variations on "I Got Rhythm" and the "Rhapsody in Blue"), and several groups of songs (with soprano Sylvia McNair).

TALLIS SCHOLARS—At the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Peter Philips leads his vocal ensemble, augmented to sixteen singers for its twenty-fifth-anniversary American tour, in two programs of large-scale polyphonic choral works from the Renaissance. Dec. 4 at 8: Music from Tudor England, including pieces by Tallis and Byrd. . . . ¶ Dec. 5 at 8 (the group's one thousandth concert): Music by Palestrina (including his "Stabat Mater"), Josquin Des Prés, Gomberg, and Thomas Crécquillon. (Park Ave. at 84th St., For information about tickets, call 800-627-0655.)

I CANTORI DI NEW YORK—Mark Shapiro leads seven recent works by as many composers, including Stephen Paulus and Adolphus Hailstork. (Grace Church, Broadway at 10th St. Dec. 5 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA—The conductorless ensemble performs works by Respighi, Tchaikovsky, and Fauré; mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves is featured in pieces by Bizet, Gershwin, and Bernstein. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 7 at 8.)

DESSOFF CHOIRS—Kent Tritle directs Mozart's C-Minor Mass and C. P. E. Bach's "Magnificat." (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. Dec. 11 at 8. For information about tickets, call 935-2551.)

NEW YORK CHAMBER SYMPHONY—Adam Stern conducts a Baroque program that includes Handel's "Water Music," as well as concertos by Bach and Telemann. (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 12 at 8 and Dec. 13 at 5.)

RECITALS

ALL ALONE—Seven twentieth-century pieces for solo performers, by Debussy, Stockhausen, Cage, and others. (Paul Recital Hall, Juilliard School, 60 Lincoln Center Plaza. Dec. 2 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

MUSIC BY HANDEL—Instrumental and vocal works, featuring harpsichordist Bradley Brookshire and soprano Dana Hanchard. (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 2 at 8.)

EMERSON STRING QUARTET—Performing quartets by Sibelius and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich (the première of her Second), in addition to Schubert's C-Major String Quintet (with cellist Carter Brey). (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 2 at 8.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER—At Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 2 at 8: The Guarneri Quartet plays quartets by Mozart (in G Major, K. 387) and Grieg, plus Franck's Piano Quintet (with Lee Luvisi assisting). . . . ¶ Dec. 4 at 8 and Dec. 6 at 5: Beethoven's Piano-and-Winds Quintet and his "Grosse Fuge," Carter's Piano Quintet, and Mozart's Wind Serenade in E-Flat Major (K. 375), in a concert that features pianist Ursula Oppens and the Arditti String Quartet.

Bargemusic—Dec. 3 at 7:30 and Dec. 6 at 4: Clarinettist Charles Neidich anchors a program that includes clarinet trios by Beethoven, Mozart, and Brahms. . . . ¶ Dec. 10 at 7:30 and Dec. 13 at 4: String quartets by Schubert (in A Minor) and Brahms (in C Minor), plus Schubert songs arranged for soprano and strings. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

Ensemble Sospeso—The Seattle-based modern-music group presents pieces by Marc-André Dalbavie and works by Boulez (his mentor) and Dutilleux. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Dec. 3 at 8.)

Christine Goerke—Soprano, with pianist Craig Rutenberg, performing songs by Strauss, Verdi, Poulenc, Libby Larsen, and Richard Hundley. (Weill Recital Hall. Dec. 4 at 8.)

Beaux Arts Trio—In its first New York performances since undergoing a two-thirds turnover of personnel last summer, the ensemble (which now comprises violinist Young Uck Kim and cellist Antonio Meneses, in addition to founding pianist Menahem Pressler) performs trios by Beethoven (in B-Flat Major, Op. 11), Ravel, and Tchaikovsky. (Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 4-5 at 8.)

Joan Rodgers—Soprano, with pianist Malcolm Martineau, performing songs by Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Wolf, and Shostakovich. (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 6 at 2.)

Focus on Corigliano—An afternoon of music by, and conversation with, John Corigliano, including performances by violinist Joshua Bell, flutist Carol Wincenc, tenor Robert White, and pianist James Tocco. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Dec. 6 at 3.)

Jessye Norman—The soprano, assisted by the Brentano String Quartet, pianist Mark Markham, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Grady Tate, performs works by Strauss, Poulenc, Chausson, and Ellington. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 6 at 5.)

Met Chamber Ensemble—Sopranos Dawn Upshaw and Joyce Guyer, mezzo-soprano Michelle DeYoung, tenor Gregory Turay, and baritone Nathan Gunn join members of the Met Orchestra in vocal chamber works by Brahms (including both volumes of his "Liebeslieder" Waltzes), Wolf, and Schoenberg ("Pierrot Lunaire"). (Weill Recital Hall. Dec. 6 at 5.)

Music by Sorabji—*Talk about eccentric: the* English composer Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (né Leon Dudley, in 1892) was one of the most peculiar musicians ever, a self-taught composer who developed a mystical, post-Busonian style of unforgiving complexity. His enthusiasm for works of inordinate length (such as his four-hour-long "Opus Clavicembalisticum") helped alienate audiences, a situation not helped in the least by his own decision, in effect from 1937 to 1975, to forbid all performances of his music. He lived out his days in a remote castle in Dorset, where he died ten years ago, leaving a legacy of much music (some eleven thousand pages of it) and a small band of cultish devotees. This concert offers the première of his Piano Quintet No. 1 (written in 1920), as well as his Piano Sonata No. 2 (last played in 1924, by the composer), his "Trois Fêtes Galantes" (in its first public performance, having been heard only once before, on a BBC radio broadcast), and his "Second Pastiche on Chopin's 'Minute' Waltz." (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 6 at 7:30.)

Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio—Performing trios by Beethoven (in B-Flat Major, Op. 11, and in D Major, Op. 70, No. 2) and Shostakovich (in E Minor). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Dec. 8-9 at 8.)

New Juilliard Ensemble—The group fêtes Elliott Carter two days before his ninetieth birthday, with a program that includes his now classic Double Concerto for Piano, Harpsichord, and Two Chamber Orchestras (composed in 1961). Also on the program are Stravinsky's Concertino (arranged by the composer, in 1952, from his 1920 String Quartet) and Boulez's "Sur Incises." (Alice Hall. Dec. 9 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

Steven Kimbrough—Baritone, with pianist Dalton Baldwin, performing songs by Korngold. (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 12 at 8.)

Juilliard String Quartet—Performing quartets by Mozart (in D Minor, K. 421), Carter (his Fifth), and Beethoven (in F Major, Op. 59, No. 1). (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Dec. 14 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

KATRINA KRIMSKY: In contemporary piano works. (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 3 at 8.) . . . **ABSOLUTE ENSEMBLE:** Music by Webern, Berio, and Mahler. (Landon Gallery, 1926 Broadway, at 64th St., third floor. 721-1716. Dec. 4 at 8.) . . . **NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLES:** Music by Mozart, Tchaikovsky, and Sigfrid Karg-Elert. (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 6 at 3.) . . . **CANTALYRICA:** A women's choir, performing Amy Beach's "Sea Fairies" and other works. (Park Avenue Christian Church, Park Ave. at 85th St. Dec. 6 at 3. Tickets at the door.) . . . **INTERNATIONAL SEJONG SOLOISTS:** Works by Pärt and Dvořák. (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 7 at 6:45.) . . . **PRO MUSICIS FOUNDATION:** Presenting violinist Carmit Zori, violist Cynthia Phelps, cellist Pamela Frame, and pianist Jon Klibonoff. performing chamber works. (Weill Recital Hall. Dec. 9 at 8.) . . . **VADIM GLUZMAN:** Violinist. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. Dec. 9 at 8. For information about tickets, call 279-4200.) . . . **FESTIVAL CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY:** Works by Michael Haydn, Stravinsky, and Schumann (his D-Minor Piano Trio). (Merkin Concert Hall. Dec. 10 at 8.) . . . **ST. CECILIA CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA:** David Randolph leads Mozart's Requiem and his C-Minor Mass. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 11 at 8.) . . . **CURTIS INSTITUTE OF MUSIC CHAMBER ORCHESTRA.** (Taipei Theatre, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 48th St. 373-1850. Dec. 12 at 7:30 and Dec. 13 at 2.) . . . **NEW YORK YOUTH SYMPHONY:** With clarinettist Richard Stoltzman. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 13 at 2.) . . . **MAKIKO HIRATA:** The pianist performs Ravel's "Miroirs," Prokofiev's Sonata No. 4, and works by Bach and Mompou. (Weill Recital Hall. Dec. 14 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Readings—Dec. 3 at 6:30: By playwright Eileen Whitfield, from her biography, "Pickford: The Woman Who Made Hollywood." (Princeton Club, 15 W. 43rd St. For more information, call 596-1676.) . . . ¶ Dec. 4 at 7:30: By Ava Chin, Lucinda Ebersole, Lance Olsen, and other contributors to the short-story anthology "It's Only Rock and Roll." (West Side Y, 5 W. 63rd St. 875-4128.) . . . ¶ Dec. 10 at 7: By poet Henri Cole. (A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Dec. 13 at 2: By Wendell Berry, from his collection "A Timbered Choir: Poems 1995-97." (Wave Hill, 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. 718-549-3200.)

Talks—Dec. 3 at 6:30: Art historian Pamela Kort talks about the work of the artist Joseph Beuys. (Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. 989-5566.) . . . ¶ Dec. 7 at 8: David Halberstam discusses his forthcoming biography of Michael Jordan. (Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. 840-6800.) . . . ¶ Dec. 8 at 6:30: Writer Richard Mooney discusses Governor's Island and its future. (Wollman Auditorium, Cooper Union, 51 Astor Pl. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ Dec. 15 at 8:15: William J. McDonough, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and one of the men who helps set interest rates, considers the challenges faced by our nation's central bank. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

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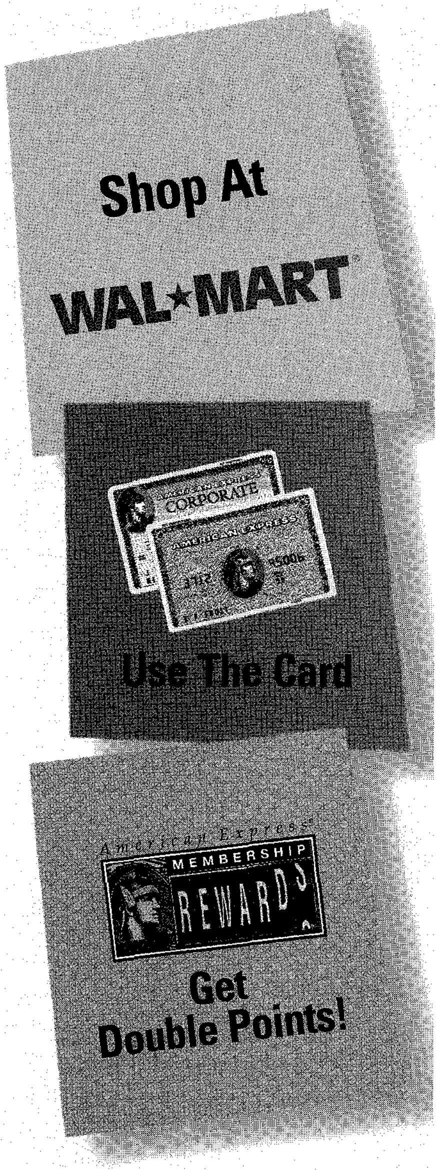

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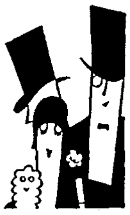
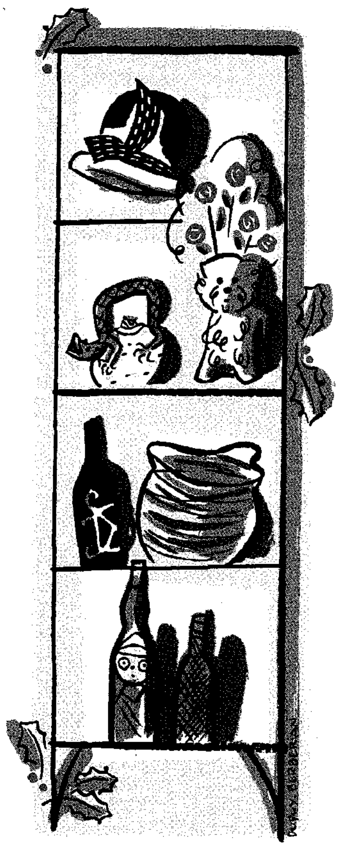
ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

The Art of Giving



AFTER a long visit to your favorite museum, studying masterpieces in oil and marble, stepping into the gift shop can be a bracing experience. These days, cash-starved museums are hawking van Gogh coffee mugs and Matisse T-shirts with an intensity that would make Disney blush. Even the Metropolitan, in its triplex superstore, offers reproductions of stone sarcophagi that are really just high-end souvenirs (do people actually reënact Howard Carter's discovery of Tut's tomb in their den?). It's getting harder and harder to find that perfect gift—something that's rare and, with any luck, splendidly useless. A few shops at some of the city's best museums are excellent places to look.



At the **Brooklyn Museum of Art** (Eastern Parkway; 718-638-5000) you'll find all sorts of odds and ends inspired by past shows. In a case filled with vintage jewelry, pipes, and pocket watches sits a plush Elsa Schiaparelli chapeau, in black and white fur, looking regal and bulbous, like the crown of a chess king ($275, with its original box). Among the many Asian items are late-nineteenth-century Chinese dragon hats for babies; the best is in fire-red silk with valentine-shaped ears and bushy Groucho eyebrows ($195). From Papua New Guinea comes a ceremonial penis cover (in various sizes, of course), starting at $30. These sheaths, decorated with feathers and grinning faces made of seashells, might make just the right gift for a priapic uncle or, well, maybe they could hold pencils or something.

The people at the **American Craft Museum** (40 W. 53rd St.; 956-3535) are also less interested in souvenirs than in real works of art. A limited-edition Dale Chihuly glass bowl, inspired by Native American baskets of the Pacific Northwest, has a voluptuously curved rim and Jupiter stripes; it's $3,100. Beautiful hand-blown glass can also be had on a budget: a suite of eight-inch-diameter ball ornaments were commissioned by the museum from the Elias Studios in western Massachusetts. Their crimsons and creams and indigos seem to ooze slowly around the globe, like the legs of a snifter of fine brandy ($50).

At the **Asia Society** (725 Park Ave.; 288-6400) gift shop, the fun things are tucked away in the rear. A good selection of Chinese calligraphy sets and Japanese *sumi* brushes ranges from $5 to $25. Teapots from Yixing, the pottery capital of China, come in a variety of styles—some look like rocks, some are smartly geometric, and some are animal-inspired. One is so fantastical—a finely wrought, U-shaped dragon pounces on a speckled yellow egg—that you can barely identify it as a teapot ($120).

The **Guggenheim SoHo** (575 Broadway; 423-3500) has a more aggressive way of pushing its high-concept shows: before you get to the museum, you have to navigate a bizarre collision of toy Eiffel towers and Ducati motorcycle jackets. A few items in the back of the shop stand out. Demonically flared gold sunglasses were originally designed for Peggy Guggenheim—$120 isn't bad for an instant transformation into Fellini-esque decadence. And for $950 you can get a limited-edition porcelain vase in the shape of a cutesy terrier puppy by artist and porn provocateur Jeff Koons.

Upon exiting "The Butterfly Conservatory," an exhibit of live lepidoptera now at the **American Museum of Natural History** (Central Park W. at 79th St.; 769-5100), you can pick up a few dead ones for your friends (in Plexiglas, $25-$200). The shop at the end of the "Haitian Vodou" show is the most vibrant in town, with flags, rattles, and spirit bottles covered in millions of sequins ($12-$999). One of the *djab* staffs ($175) by Port-au-Prince artist Pierrot Barra is deliriously menacing, topped by a horned baby-doll head with faux-jewel eyes—it's some powerful medicine.

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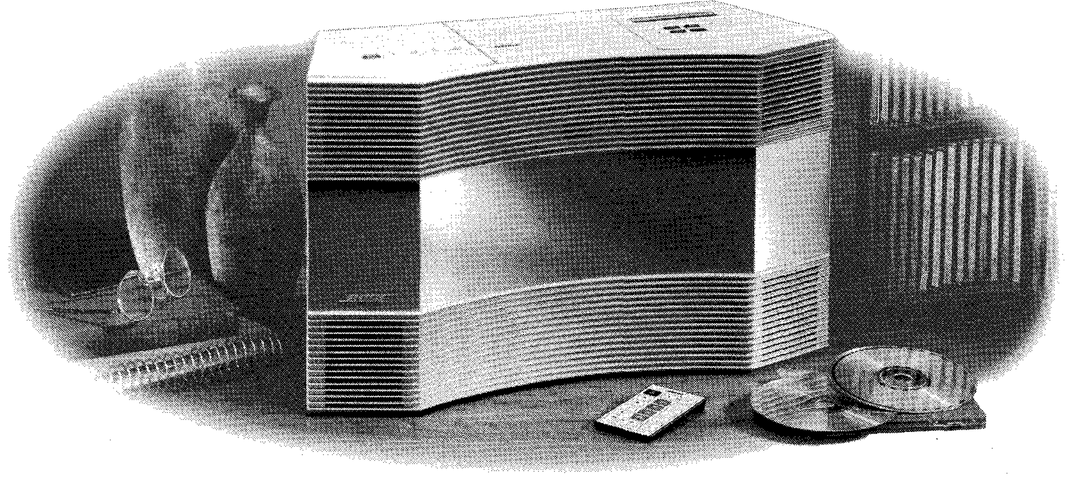

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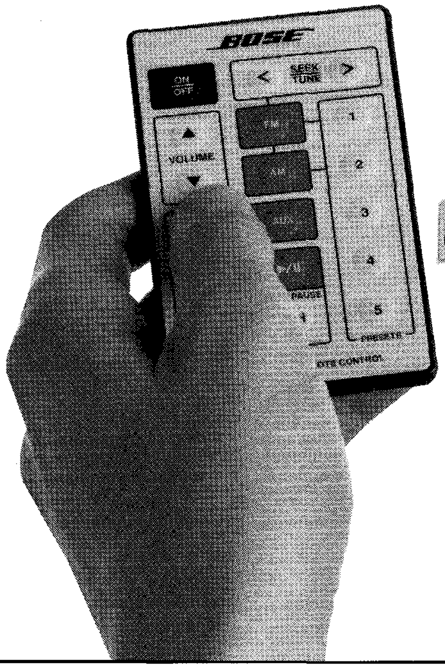

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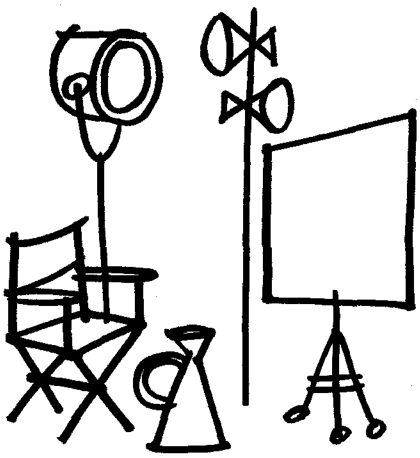
THE MOVIES



OPENING

Divorce Iranian Style—Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Dec. 9.

Hallelujah! Ron Athey: A Story of Deliverance—A documentary directed by Catherine Gund Saalfield. Opening Dec. 4.

Hi Life—A romantic comedy, directed by Roger Hedden, with Eric Stoltz, Campbell Scott, and Moira Kelly. Opening Dec. 4. (The Screening Room.)

Jack Frost—A young boy (Joseph Cross) wishes for the return of his dead father (Michael Keaton) at Christmastime. Directed by Troy Miller. Opening Dec. 11.

The Land Is White, the Seed Is Black and **African Violet**—Two short films about apartheid-era South Africa, both directed by Koto Bolofo. Dec. 2-8. (Film Forum.)

Little Voice—Writer-director Mark Herman's adaptation of Jim Cartwright's play "The Rise and Fall of Little Voice," about a girl who can sing in the voices of Judy Garland, Billie Holiday, and others. With Jane Horrocks, Michael Caine, Brenda Blethyn, and Ewan McGregor. Opening Dec. 4. (Paris.)

The Ogre—Director Volker Schlöndorff's story is set in Germany during the Second World War. With John Malkovich and Armin Mueller-Stahl. Opening Dec. 11. (Quad Cinema.)

Port Djema—The adventures of a French surgeon (Jean-Yves Dubois) in an East African country. Directed by Eric Heumann. In French. Opening Dec. 11.

Psycho—Gus Van Sant's remake of the 1960 Alfred Hitchcock thriller. With Vince Vaughn, Anne Heche, and Julianne Moore. Opening Dec. 4.

Rushmore—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Dec. 11.

Shakespeare in Love—A romantic comedy about Will Shakespeare (Joseph Fiennes), who, in 1593, has writer's block. Also with Gwyneth Paltrow, Geoffrey Rush, and Colin Firth; directed by John Madden. Opening Dec. 11.

Shattered Image—A psychological thriller, directed by Raul Ruiz, with William Baldwin, Anne Parillaud, and Graham Greene. Opening Dec. 4. (Village East Cinemas.)

A Simple Plan—A thriller about three men (Bill Paxton, Billy Bob Thornton, and Brent Briscoe) who discover a wrecked plane and four million dollars. Directed by Sam Raimi. Opening Dec. 11.

Star Trek: Insurrection—The further adventures of Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) and the crew of the Enterprise. Directed by Jonathan Frakes. Opening Dec. 11.

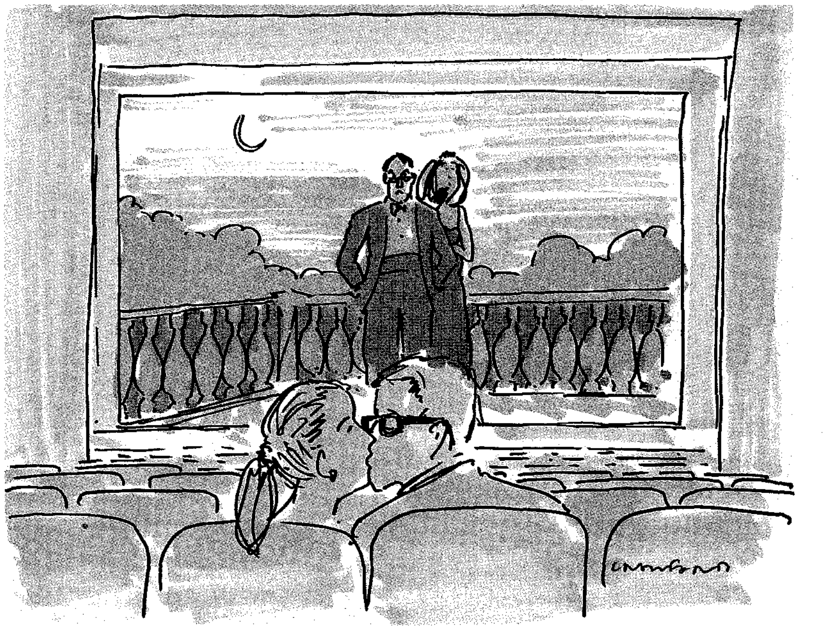
FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

Babe: Pig in the City—The further adventures of the talking pig, directed by George Miller. With James Cromwell. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street East, and Village East Cinemas.)

A Bug's Life—A computer-animated film about an ant colony threatened by a group of grasshoppers. Directed by John Lasseter and Andrew Stanton. (Cinema I, Guild, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

Celebrity—Woody Allen assembles yet another all-star cast; this time, stardom itself is the object of his attention. Kenneth Branagh, trying out a Woody Allen impersonation that makes you want to hide under your seat and cram popcorn in your ears, plays a journalist with an itch. He hops from a rotten marriage with Robin (Judy Davis) to an actress (Melanie Griffith), and from there to a supermodel (Charlize Theron) with erogenous zones all over her body; he then takes up with a book editor of rare beauty (Famke Janssen), whom for some unfathomable reason he discards in favor of another actress (Winona Ryder). The hero's restlessness infects the rest of the movie; the story feels febrile and unhappy, and Allen seems to take his dissatisfaction out on his helpless characters—especially the women. The only moment of joy comes when Robin, corralling the guests for a TV show, sends a rabbi into the same room as a bunch of Klansmen ("Have the skinheads eaten all the bagels already?"). With Michael Lerner, Bebe Neuwirth, Joe Mantegna as a nice guy, and Leonardo DiCaprio as a spoiled brat. Filmed in black-and-white by Sven Nykvist.—*Anthony Lane* (11/23/98) (Astor Plaza, BAM Rose Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)



MICHAEL CRAWFORD

Central Station—Against her nature, Dora (Fernanda Montenegro), an intelligent but nihilistic old bag—a retired schoolteacher who writes letters for illiterate people and then never mails them—leaves Rio de Janeiro with a little boy in tow and takes to the road. The boy's mother has been killed, and his desire to see his missing father stirs something in Dora. The two of them are practically hoboes, but once they leave Rio life opens up for them. This shrewd, tough, and bighearted Brazilian movie, directed by Walter Salles, moves surely and convincingly from utter negation to something like guarded optimism. A great star in Brazil, Montenegro rivals such legendary actresses as Jeanne Moreau and Giulietta Masina in her ability to alter her moods from mask-of-tragedy woe to childish pleasure without apparent calculation. With handsome Vinicius de Oliveira as the boy and Marília Pêra as Dora's friendly neighbor. In Portuguese.—*David Denby* (11/30/98) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Dancing at Lughnasa—Director Pat O'Connor's film of the Brian Friel play about five Irish Catholic sisters (Meryl Streep, Catherine McCormack, Sophie Thompson, Kathy Burke, and Brid Brennan) in 1936 who await the arrival of their long-absent elder brother (Michael Gambon). (BAM Rose Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

Divorce Iranian Style—Working with the anthropologist Ziba Mir-Hosseini, director Kim Longinotto offers a very fresh documentary peek at the Iranian divorce courts—a world whose rich human variety, bureaucracy, and outrageous sexism would test the descriptive powers of Dickens, Kafka, or Betty Friedan. Longinotto has the good taste to stay in the background; her subjects, such as a woman whose husband has forbidden her to answer the telephone for the past thirty years, are more than fascinating enough. In Farsi.—*Sarah Kerr* (Film Forum; starting Dec. 9.)

Elizabeth—A grisly, flamboyant account of the Virgin Queen's early days as a monarch. Screenwriter Michael Hirst alters and conflates events that took place over many years—by degrees, Elizabeth (Cate Blanchett), a Protestant surrounded by powerful Catholics, takes control of England by pulling off a kind of internal coup d'état. The means of her ascension is Sir Francis Walsingham (Geoffrey Rush), a perfect Machiavellian character who serves the Queen as adviser, deadly assassin, and spy. Elizabeth's climb to power, however, is a personal disaster: the supple-waisted maiden with long red hair becomes stiff and harsh, emerging from her youth white-faced and trapped in the armor of a thick brocade dress. The movie is a horror film masquerading as a historical pageant. Directed by Shekhar Kapur.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

Enemy of the State—In this breathlessly paranoid Tony Scott thriller, a young Washington labor lawyer (Will Smith) unwittingly receives some incriminating evidence of wrongdoing by an official (Jon Voight) high up in the National Security Agency. The official wants it back. Despite much blather about the right to privacy, the movie is essentially an endless chase, in which Smith is pursued and spied on by cars, vans, cameras (still and video), microphones, tape recorders, satellites, helicopters, computers (desktop), voice analyzers, humans, and two

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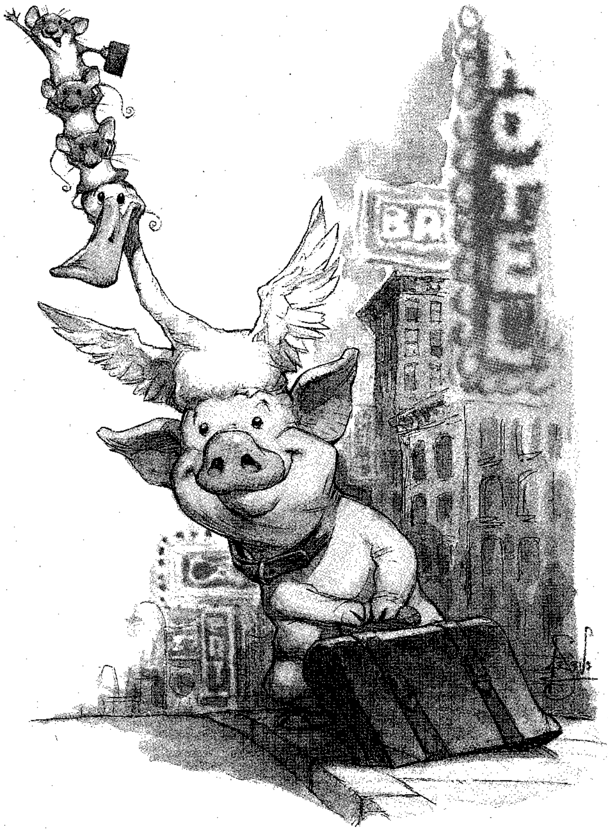
spotted owls. The movie goes like the wind, but it's more a technological exercise than anything else. Lickety-split editing by Chris Lebenzon; produced, furiously, by Jerry Bruckheimer.—*D.D.* (84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Embassy 2, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Union Square.)

Gods and Monsters—In the nineteen-fifties, the British-born director James Whale, who had lent depth and dignity to the horror film with "Frankenstein" and "Bride of Frankenstein," idled away his time, all but forgotten by the movie industry, in Pacific Palisades, California; eventually, he drowned in his pool. Bill Condon's elegant and tactful picture, based on Christopher Bram's novel "Father of Frankenstein," speculates on what might have happened in those final days. The inquiry draws fine performances from Ian McKellen as the dandyish Whale and from Brendan Fraser as his (wholly fictitious) gardener, Clayton Boone, with whom the older man becomes obsessed. With Lynn Redgrave as a Puritan housekeeper.—*A.L.* (11/9/98) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

The Last Millionaire (1934)—The queen of the bankrupt mythical kingdom of Casinario, which is modelled somewhat on Monaco and bears a resemblance to the Marx Brothers' kingdom in "Duck Soup," invites the world's richest banker (Max Dearly) to run things. He becomes dictator, is hit on the head and lapses into childish ways, and the people go on taking his idiotic edicts as signs of genius. Chairs, hats, and cravats are banned, and the new system of barter results in such transactions as a customer who pays his café bill with a hen and receives two chicks and an egg in change. When the picture came out, the political atmosphere in Europe was so sensitive that this light satirical comedy by René Clair (not quite at his best) was banned in Italy and Germany, and was such a scandalous failure in France that its writer-director left the country. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; Dec. 6 and Dec. 11.)

Life Is Beautiful—Would that it were. The great, donkey-faced Italian clown Roberto Benigni attempts an ambitious fable of comedy's redemptive power. He plays an Italian Jew who keeps alive his little boy's innocence in a Nazi concentration camp by pretending that the routines of the camp are no more than an intricate game staged for his son's benefit. But Benigni's ironic counter-reality undermines this movie, not the Nazis, who were beyond ridicule for the same reason that they were beyond rationality. Totalitarianism makes the fantastic literal—that is its demonic appeal. Benigni's jokes and games just aren't enough, and you leave the movie thinking that what's touching is not Benigni's ministrations to the little boy but his own need to believe in comedy as salvation. With Giorgio Cantarini, who has the heartbreaking quality of the children in the old neorealist movies, as the boy. In Italian.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (Angelika Film Center. . . . ¶ Paris; through Dec. 3.)

Living Out Loud—The sinews in Holly Hunter's neck and arms tighten like cables hauled in by a winch; she's all wired up, and in Richard LaGravenese's lovely comedy about loneliness in New York she uses the tension as a source of comedy. The movie hits an early high when Hunter, abandoned by her husband and alone in her Fifth Avenue co-op at night, runs through her fantasies and fears in a breathless internal whisper. Since she doesn't have to speak, Hunter does a rabbity, detailed facial commentary on what she's thinking. Based loosely on two Chekhov stories, the picture is about the ways that unlikely people reach out to one another, and it features a lyrical Manhattan, warmer than Woody Allen's, in which friends drop into their regular night club, chat, and listen to performers like Queen Latifah sing easy blues about the strange predicaments of life. With Danny DeVito, quiet for once, as a failure who hasn't given up hope.—*D.D.* (11/30/98) (Embassy 3, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 72nd Street East, and Village East Cinemas.)



George Miller's "Babe: Pig in the City."

PETER DE SÈVE

Meet Joe Black—Martin Brest's new weepie is a loose rehash of Mitchell Leisen's 1934 "Death Takes a Holiday." Leisen brought his work in at less than ninety minutes; Brest has time to kill, and after three hours of emotional splurge he can hardly bear to tear himself away. Anthony Hopkins plays a media tycoon with a heart, which is in itself a difficult concept to grapple with; Claire Forlani plays his daughter, who is engaged to a dork in a good suit. She hopes for something better, and along it comes in the shape of Brad Pitt. He has the misfortune to die shortly afterward, but you can't have everything. Death then assumes Brad's body, and, taking the name Joe Black, arrives to claim the tycoon's soul and woo his daughter all over again. There are many unanswered questions here (why, for instance, does Pitt's Grim Reaper seem semi-retarded?), not to mention unintended spasms of comedy; in the end, however, they all get swallowed up in the mush.—*A.L.* (11/23/98) (Beekman, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

One Way Passage (1932)—Imagine "The Lady Eve" crossed with "Love Affair" and you've got the appeal of this robust Tay Garnett-directed tearjerker, which predates both of them. William Powell stars as a Dapper Dan sort of criminal (he's actually called Dan), on the lam for the murder of "the dirtiest heel who ever lived." Good-guy lawman Warren Hymer arrests him in Hong Kong and takes him on a ship to San Francisco; en route, Dan falls in love with a brown-eyed beauty (Kay Francis) who is living with her own medical death sentence. She doesn't know that he's a killer; what gives the film its comic and melodramatic vitality is the way con artists Aline MacMahon and Frank McHugh (and ultimately Hymer) help the graceful, urbane Powell preserve Francis's romantic illusions.—*Michael Sragow* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Dec. 13.)

Pixote (1980)—A shockingly lyrical Brazilian film about the life of abandoned children who learn to pick pockets and grab purses and hustle—it's their only way of surviving. Thrown into a reformatory, the ten-year-old Pixote watches as several of the larger boys gang-rape a kid not much older than he is, and his truculent baby face is indifferent, but he's a little camera taking it all in. A group of boys, including Pixote, break out, and he and three others snatch enough purses and wallets to make their way to Rio de Janeiro and begin dealing cocaine. Outsmarted by the adult criminals, the kids buy an aging, drunken prostitute from a pimp and go into business with her: she brings men home, and they rob them at gunpoint. As the director, Hector Babenco (who appears in a prologue), sees it, Pixote is a snub-nosed infant asserting his wants, and when they're denied he changes into a baby gangster—a runt Scarface, who kills innocently, in the sense that he doesn't understand the enormity of the crime. The thesis is too pat, but two of the characters—Lilica (Jorge Julião), a flamingly nelly seventeen-year-old transvestite homosexual, and the whore Sueli, the whoriest whore imaginable (Marília Pêra)—transcend it. In Portuguese.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Dec. 8.)

The Siege—New York is terrorized by Islamic militants. Bombs go off everywhere; casualties climb into the hundreds; no one can go *shopping*. "The Siege" offers an improbable set of circumstances and then gets all hot under the collar as it rejects the preposterous situation that it has set up. The filmmakers peddle fear and then try to claim the moral high ground; the treatment is foolish, confused, and borderline irresponsible. With Denzel Washington, Bruce Willis, Annette Bening, and Tony Shalhoub. Directed by Edward Zwick.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

AMERICAN HISTORY X: Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Regency. . . . **THE CELEBRATION:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **HAPPINESS** (reviewed in our issue of 10/19/98): Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6. . . . **HOME FRIES:** Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square. . . . **I STILL KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER:** Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square. . . . **PLEASANTVILLE:** First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **RINGMASTER:** Criterion Center, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square. . . . **THE RUGRATS MOVIE:** East 85th Street, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **VERY BAD THINGS:** First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, State, Union Square, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **WAKING NED DEVINE:** Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, and Lincoln Square. . . . **THE WATERBOY:** Cinema 3rd Avenue, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.

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REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2 and 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**Theatre 2:** Dec. 2-3: "The Singing Blacksmith" (1938, Edgar G. Ulmer; in Yiddish) and "Green Fields" (1939, Ulmer and Jacob Ben-Ami; in Yiddish). . . . From Dec. 4: A new director's cut of "The Last Emperor" (1987, Bernardo Bertolucci). . . . **Theatre 3:** "Touch of Evil" (1958, Orson Welles).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Dec. 13: A series of films directed by René Clair, including, on Dec. 6 at 1 and Dec. 11 at 6, "The Last Millionaire" (†). . . . Through Jan. 22: A program of films from Brazil, including, on Dec. 8 at 6, "Pixote" (†).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Dec. 3: A program of films by Iranian director Dariush Mehrju; all in Farsi, with English subtitles. . . . From Dec. 4: A program of recent Spanish films and a retrospective of films by Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón; all in Spanish, with English subtitles. . . . Dec. 5-6 at 2: "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" (1954, Stanley Donen). . . . Dec. 12-13 at 2: Two different programs of dance on film.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Dec. 5 at 2: "Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise" (1931, Robert Z. Leonard), with Greta Garbo. . . . Dec. 5-6 at 4: "Ninotchka" (1939, Ernst Lubitsch), with Garbo. . . . Dec. 6 at 2: "My Man Godfrey" (1936, Gregory La Cava), with Carole Lombard. . . . Dec. 12 at 2: "Morocco" (1930, Josef von Sternberg), with Marlene Dietrich. . . . Dec. 12 at 4: "Shanghai Express" (1932, von Sternberg), with Dietrich. . . . Dec. 13 at 2: "One Way Passage" (†). . . . Dec. 13 at 4: "Trouble in Paradise" (1932, Lubitsch), with Kay Francis.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—A retrospective (through Dec. 22) of films featuring Catherine Deneuve. Dec. 8 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Thieves" (1996, André Téchiné; in French). . . . Dec. 15 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Le Bon Plaisir" (1984, Francis Girod; in French).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Dec. 6 at 7, the feature will be "Witness for the Prosecution" (1957, Billy Wilder); on Dec. 13 at 7, "Portrait in Black" (1960, Michael Gordon).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Dec. 2 at 7:30 and 9; Dec. 3 at 5, 6:30, and 8; Dec. 4 at 6 and 7:30; Dec. 5 at 4 and 5:30; Dec. 6 at 3 and 5; Dec. 8 at 7 and 9; Dec. 9 at 7:30 and 9; Dec. 10 at 5 and 6:30; Dec. 11 at 3 and 10:30; Dec. 12 at 4:15; and Dec. 13 at 2:30, 4, and 5:30: "My Knees Were Jumping" (1996, Melissa Hacker). . . . A program of films directed by and/or featuring John Cassavetes. Dec. 4 at 6:30: "A Woman Under the Influence" (1975). . . . Dec. 4 at 9:30, Dec. 5 at 5, and Dec. 6 at 4:30: "Shadows" (1959). . . . Dec. 5 at 7: "Mikey and Nicky" (1976, Elaine May). . . . Dec. 5 at 9:30, Dec. 6 at 6:30, and Dec. 12 at 9:15: "A Child Is Waiting" (1963). . . . Dec. 6 at 2, Dec. 12 at 4, and Dec. 13 at 7: "Minnie and Moskowitz" (1971). . . . Dec. 6 at 8:30, Dec. 11 at 7, and Dec. 12 at 2: "The Killing of a Chinese Bookie" (1978). . . . Dec. 11 at 9, Dec. 12 at 6:30, and Dec. 13 at 4:30: "Husbands" (1970). . . . Dec. 13 at 2 and 9:15: "Gloria" (1980).

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THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-623-2770.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, 2, and 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

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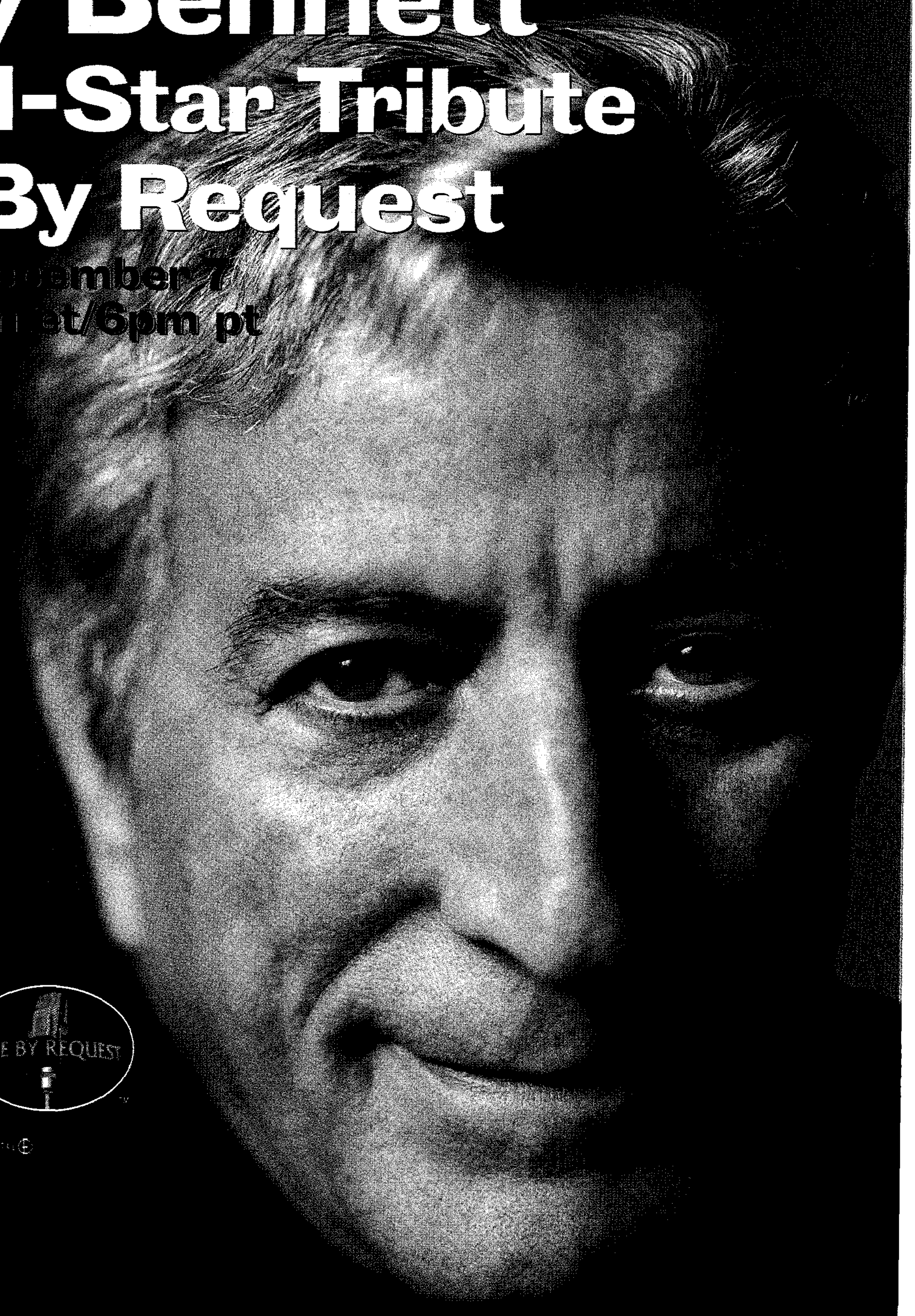

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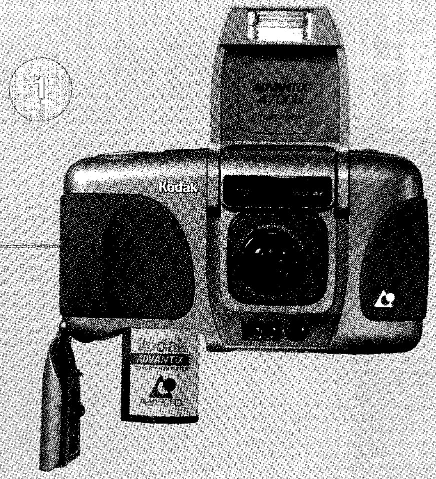

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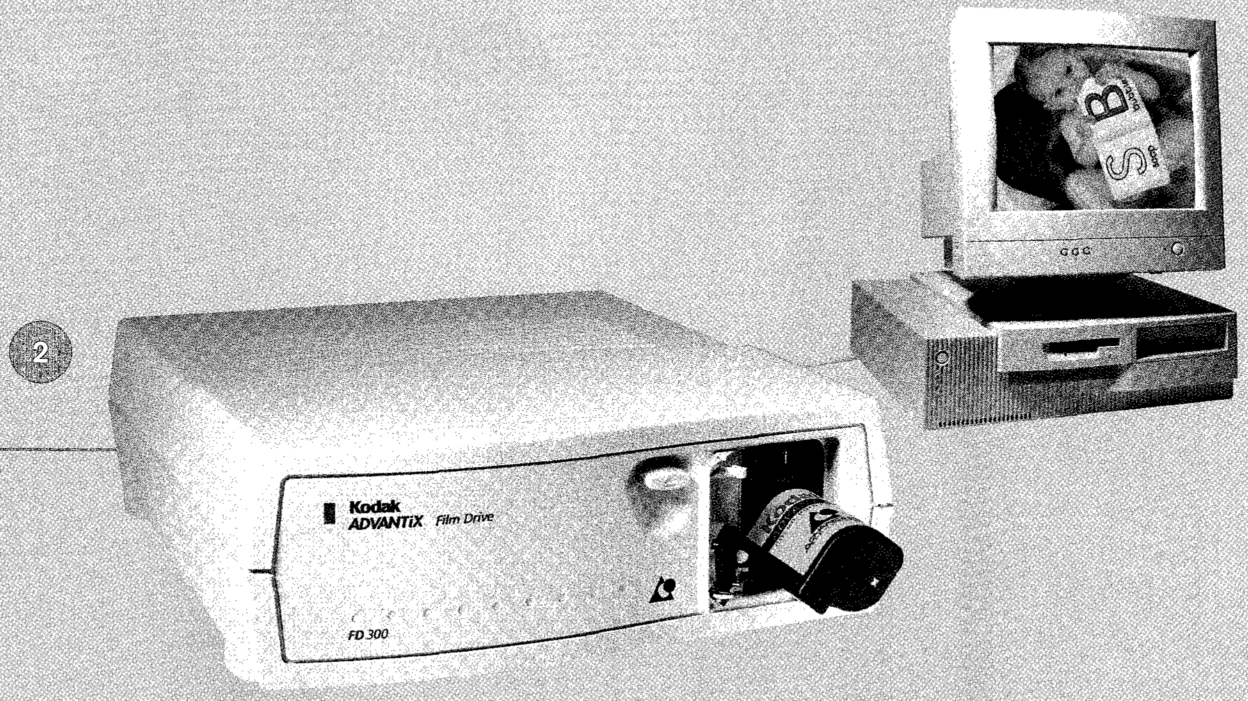

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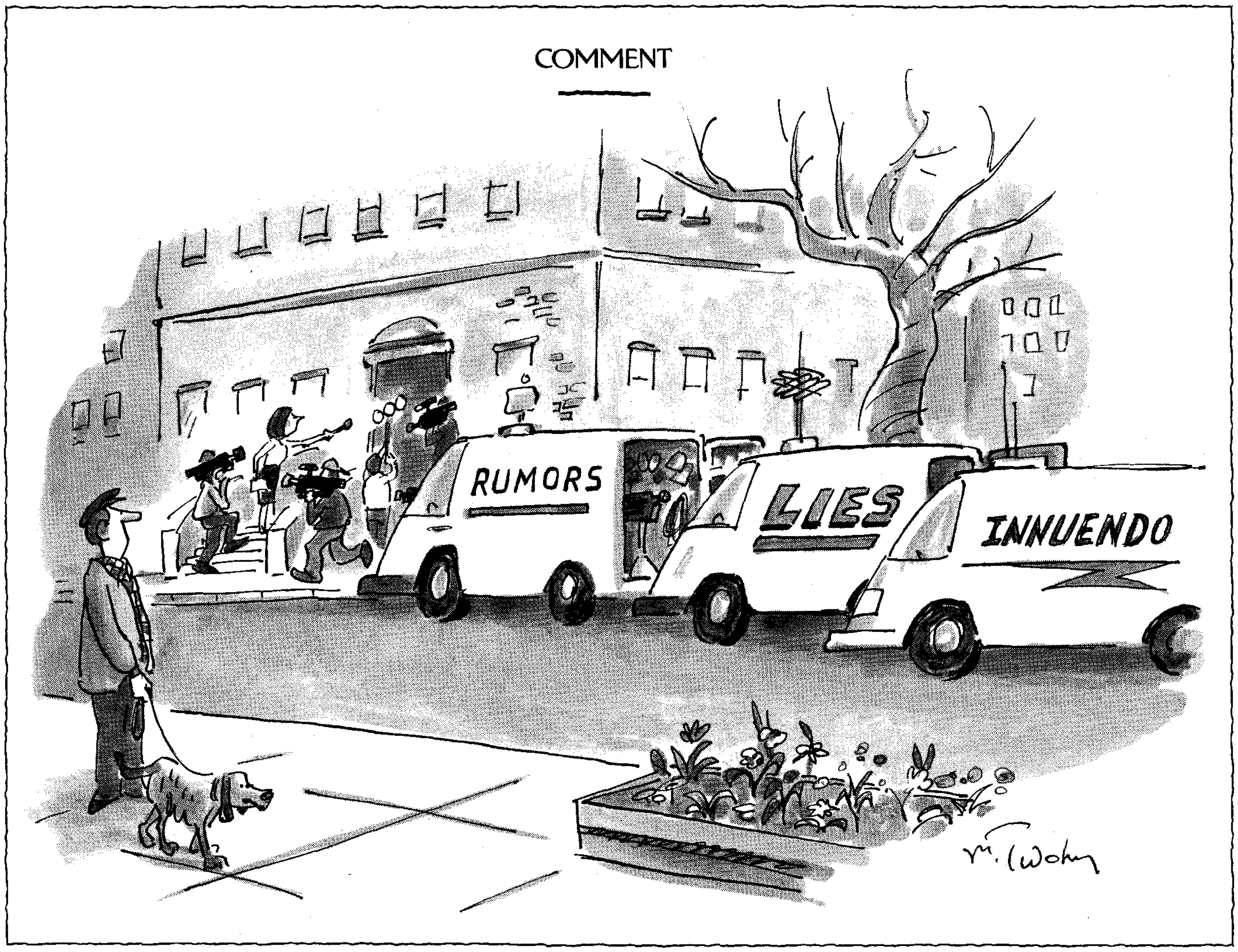

THE SPORTING LIFE

Kevin Costner takes the mound at Yankee Stadium.

CONTRARY to popular belief, the Yankees' final game at the Stadium this year wasn't Game Two of their World Series sweep but a grudging 1–0 loss to Detroit, in which the veteran Tiger right-hander Billy Chapel threw a shutout in what may have been the final effort of his nineteen-year career. Big-league baseball has been trying to speed up play, but this game, it must be admitted, dragged on a bit, with Chapel sometimes being permitted four or five or ten or fifteen minutes between pitches. There were some great plays, though, and if you missed one you could probably catch it again, live, a bit later on. The action will seem fast enough, in any case, when it's replayed next summer, in Universal's "For Love of the Game," the first baseball movie to concentrate on one full game (plus flashbacks) and to star a famous actor, Kevin Costner, whose drop-down curveball to the outside corner, freezing a right-handed batter for a called third strike, reminds you instantly of David Cone.

Yankee Stadium, visited on a November Saturday, had been turned into a studio, all right, with a "Wardrobe" sign outside the press dining room, a yellow camera boom looming above the

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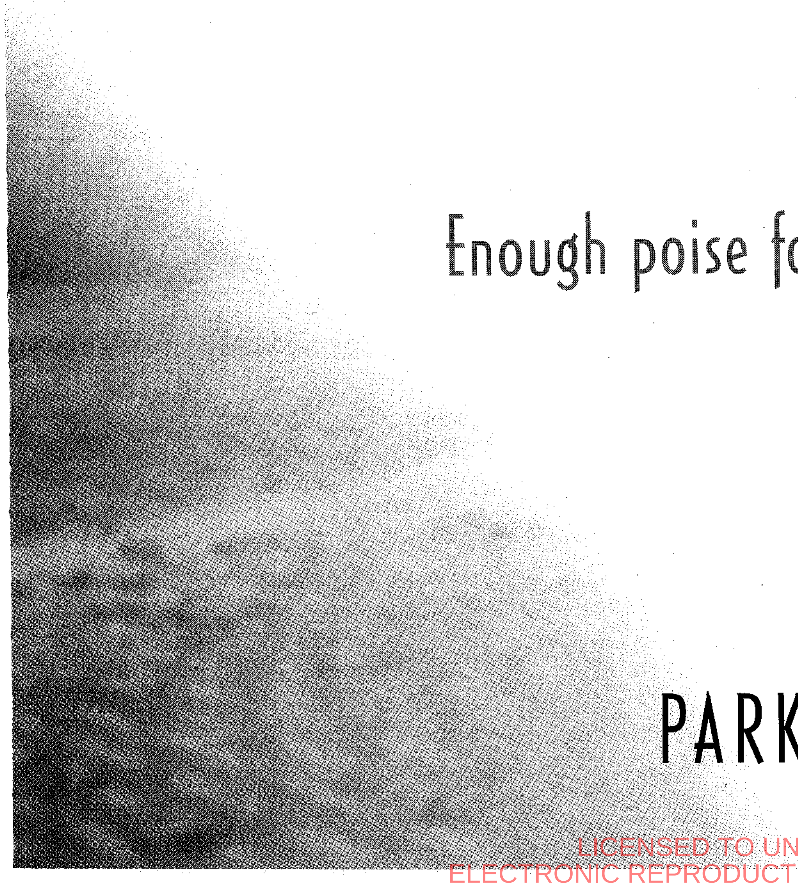
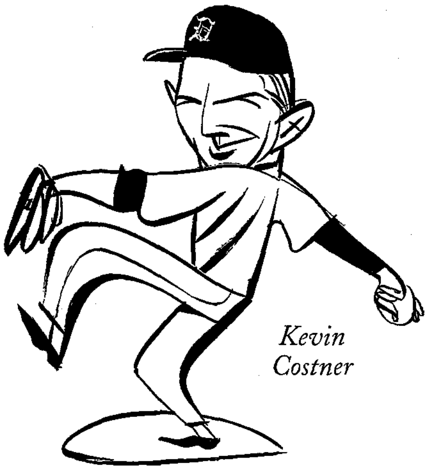


Enough poise for a New York catwalk.

PARK AVENUE BY BUICK

first-base coaching box, and a hundred or so movie-crew types, in jeans and Adidas, outnumbering the pin-striped Yankees and gray-clad visiting Tigers. Still, there were prickles of baseball everywhere. One of the Yankee players running onto the field as the teams changed sides looked very much like—yes, it was—the rookie Ricky Ledee, who batted .400 in the recent post-season; and the ump making the "out" call on a diving, rolling catch by the Tiger second baseman was the National League's own Jerry Crawford. Another anonymous Yankee was Juan Nieves, who once pitched a nonfictional no-hitter, for the Brewers.


Kevin Costner

What grabbed us, crew and visitors alike, wasn't just the work of making a movie but Costner's arm and his toughness. All afternoon and on into the early-autumn dark, Costner, wearing No. 14 on his back, below the "CHAPEL," threw for takes and retakes, delivering strikes at a modest seventy-plus miles per hour but with an easy, over-the-top motion and elegant follow-through: nothing actorish or elbowy about it. Costner, who played a catcher in the terrific "Bull Durham" and a baseball-smitten farmer in "Field of Dreams" (and a professional golfer in "Tin Cup"), is one of the most graceful physical actors of our time, and, at forty-three, a remarkable athlete.

Gene Monahan, the Yankee head trainer, who took charge of Billy Chapel's right arm the moment the World Series ended, said that after four weeks of work from the mound, and sometimes as many as ninety pitches per day, Costner had "relegated himself" to the reality of a constantly aching arm. The film's baseball adviser, Augie Garrido, who coaches the University of Texas team, guessed that what Costner was experiencing now was close to what David Cone or David Wells had felt at the end of a full season's work. "He's had to dig deep," he said, "and he's made some phenomenal pitches."

Talking with the horizontal Costner in the Yankee training room, while Monahan lengthily anointed and kneaded his right arm, I asked about the last shot of the day—a pitch that is instantly followed by a line drive up by his face (a ball thrown, in fact, from about thirty feet away) that he gloves for the last out of the first inning. On each take, he had flung his head back suddenly as the ball arrived, and then, recovering, coolly walked off the mound. Was that flinch the reaction of an athlete or an actor?

"Some things your body does out of a sense of memory," he said, "but that moment is planned. There's a pause for the 'Wow!' to himself—he's still alive—but I think the walk-off afterward is more important. It's that decompression."

The risky shot was made with what looked like a softer baseball, but Costner said that the last take had been with the real thing. "The glove wasn't showing the ball doing what it does going into a mitt—you know, it's almost like a gun that kicks when that happens. So we did it the other way in the end. I like specificity."

Pitching on the holy Bronxian turf held no specific thrills for him. "I like the plain name," he said, in his flattened, familiar tone. "'Yankee Stadium'—it's nearly arrogant." Nor did he appear to hold dreamy thoughts about the pastime itself. "When this is done, I'll be identified with three different baseball movies," he said, "but if they'd been football stories I'd have made those just the same." —ROGER ANGELL

THE GRIMM TRUTH

The cloak is mine.
The basket, too.

And the long
dark braids

grow straight from my head,
as teeth do,

my dear wolf.

—GERI PETERSON

BRAVE NEW WORLD DEPT.

Will business trump pleasure at the Harvard Club?

No one in this country has ever been denied the status of gentleman just because he was "in trade," but even here a gentleman is expected to keep his social and his commercial identities distinct. Symbolically, the most important expression of this principle has always been the rule at private clubs which forbids the display of business papers. So when the Harvard Club announced recently that it was beginning a trial period during which members would be allowed to display papers at breakfast, it appeared to be subverting gentlemanly standards in the gravest way. What would be next, some wondered—an initiative encouraging members to bandy a woman's name?

Of course, women are themselves admitted to the Harvard Club these days, but that should be irrelevant to the code of etiquette. John Cetra, the chairman of the club's House Committee, explained the new policy on business papers this way: "We wanted to see if it would increase usage during breakfast. We have a successful club, but you have to keep on top of what your members need." According to Cetra, papers have been allowed on the balcony of the dining room for several years, but they will continue to be forbidden at lunch in the main dining room and in common areas, where international-symbol-style ideographs warn against them.

"The main purpose of the no-papers rule is to maintain the spirit of a social and intellectual environment," Cetra says. Clearly, though, that spirit has been challenged. The Harvard Club has a business center, and business meetings are held constantly in private rooms. Several members told me that they think business is carried on all over the club on a regular basis. "At any given

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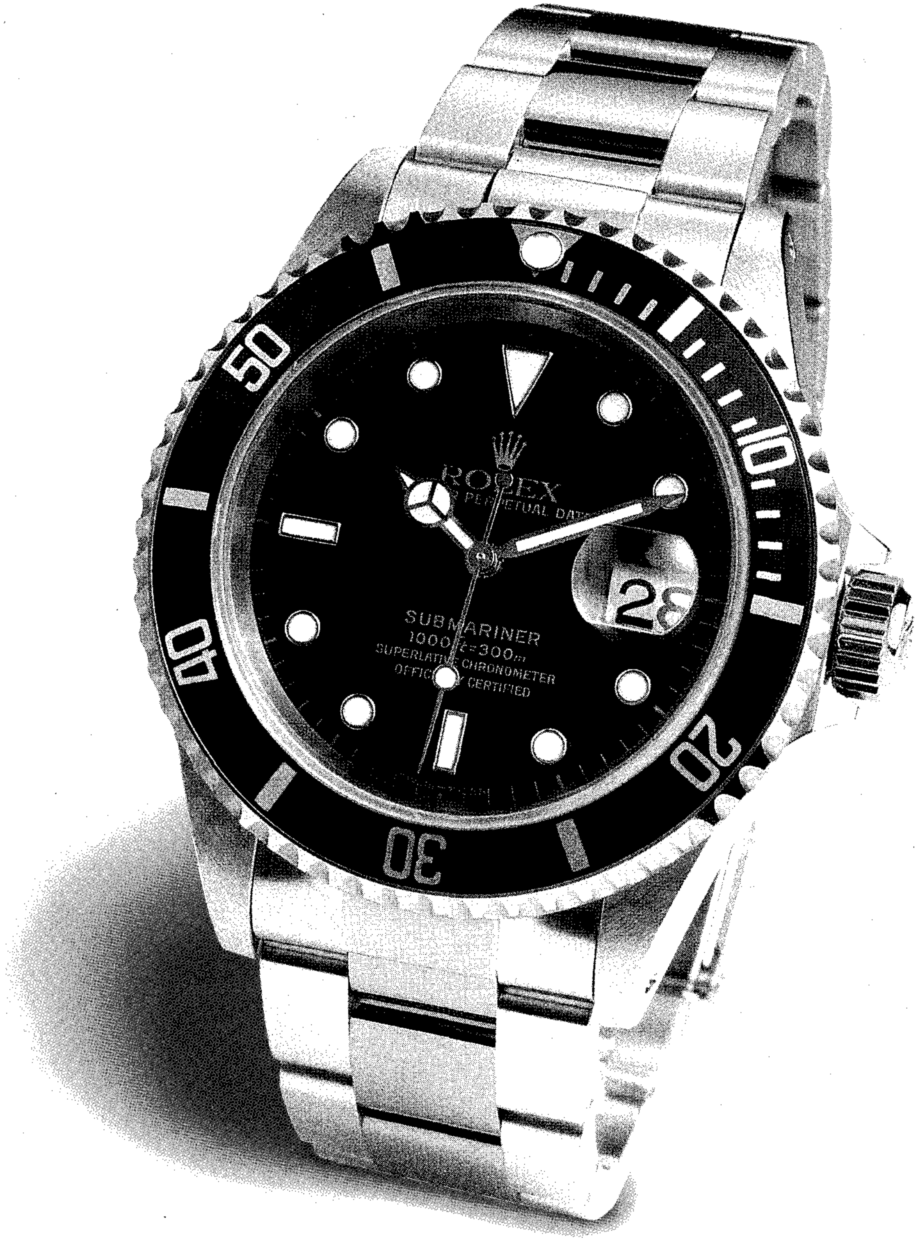

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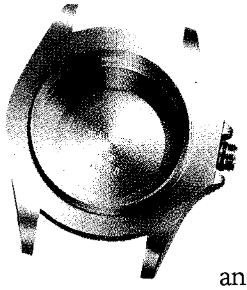

A Rolex is not only handsome, it is extremely rugged, and the key is its trademark Oyster case sculpted from 18kt gold or stainless steel. The case, combined with the synthetic sapphire crystal and patented Triplock winding crown, creates a virtually impenetrable miniature vault which, for this Submariner, is pressure-proof to 1,000 feet. Its legendary durability has made it the standard of excellence among divers, and is just one reason why this timepiece grows even more impressive the deeper you delve into it.

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ROLEX

time," one said, "there are more résumés at the Harvard Club than there are at Kinkos."

It seemed wise to call the Yale Club for a comparison. The president, William Weber, declined to make any slighting remarks about the rival establishment; rather, he said that at his club the rule against displaying papers is flouted all the time. In fact, he is one of the flouters. "I've done it for years," he said. "But I try to be discreet."

One might easily conclude from all this that the victory of trade has been complete, but that's not the case. At the city's old-line, male-only clubs, members still adhere strictly to the no-papers rule. Grant Winthrop, the president of the Knickerbocker Club, was quite emphatic on this point. "The Knick has a very aggressive anti-conducting-of-business policy," he said. The problem comes up so rarely, he added, that he doesn't even know what action is taken when members bring out papers. "I think that the maître d' slips them a note," he said. Winthrop drew a mildly withering contrast between a place like the Knickerbocker Club and the Harvard Club: "They are positively in the business of seeking out members. I think of the Harvard Club more as a facility."

In fact, the Knickerbocker Club, the Brook Club, the Union Club, and other such clubs take a stronger stand against business now than they did twenty years ago, and for a curious reason. In 1984, the city passed Local Law 63, which states that if a club receives payment from businesses for members' dues or for the use of facilities it will be subject to anti-discrimination laws. The result was that the business-related parties and meetings that used to take place at these clubs were forbidden, as was the practice of allowing a member to have his dues reimbursed by his firm. "It's had a good effect on the tone," one club president said of the law. "It shouldn't have been happening at all, but it was—the J. P. Morgan cocktail party, the Citibank cocktail party." The city's most select men's clubs have the Commission on Human Rights to thank for this improvement in their atmosphere. Meanwhile, where the Harvard Club is concerned the gentility gap just gets wider.

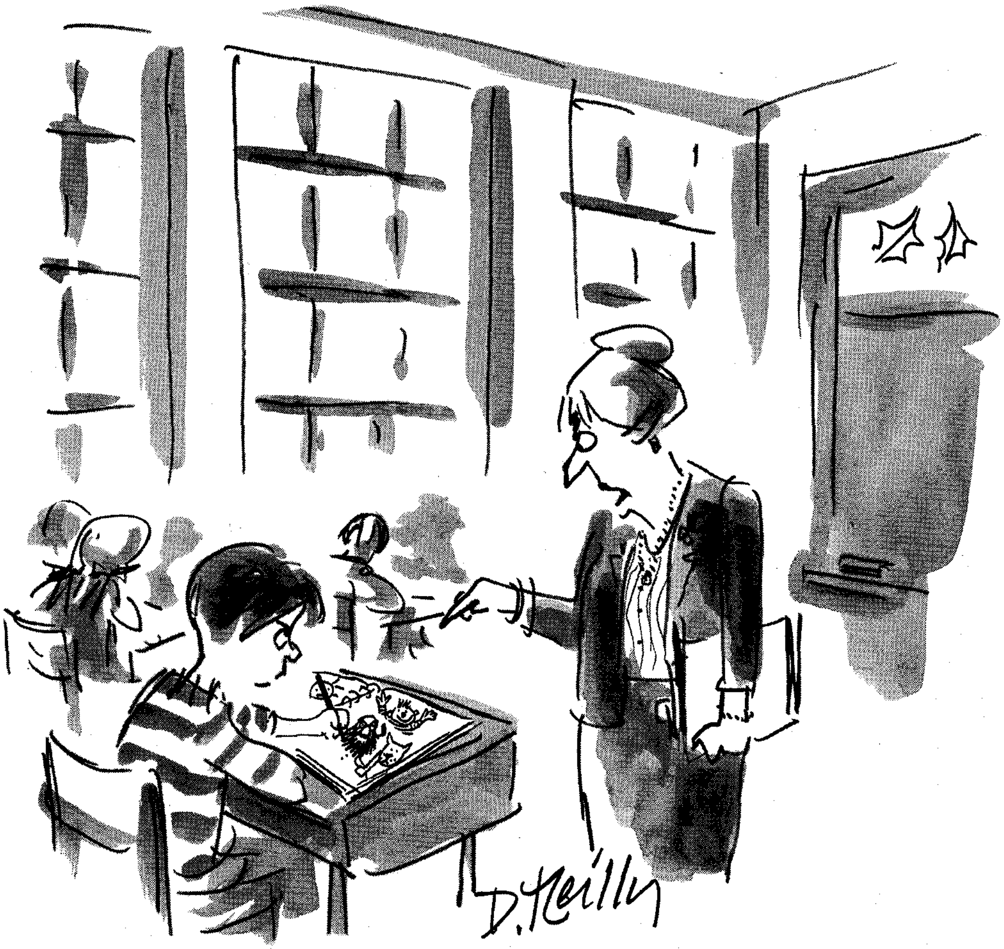
—James Collins

COURTSIDE

The official N.B.A. Store settles for hang time.

OWING to a high-level policy impasse in negotiations pertaining to the ongoing execution of the professional athletic activity known to those falling within the jurisdiction of the United States, *inter alios,* as "roundball" or "hoops," the closest your sorry old season-ticket-holding butt is going to get to a basketball game right now is at the new N.B.A. Store on Fifth Avenue, where you can watch a scratchy old tape of Oscar Robertson of the '73-'74 Milwaukee Bucks shoot free throws while you shop for an official N.B.A. Barbie. The N.B.A. Store is one of those loud, glossy, postapocalyptic megaplaces rimmed with mountains of video monitors and nuclear-powered displays and lots and lots of cash registers, and it opened this past September 18th, a mere forty days before the National Basketball Association announced that, because of a dispute between the owners and the players, all league games were suspended through the end of November, and the '98-'99 season was indefinitely postponed. *And* the foul!

No wonder the other day the mood in the store was a little somnolent. Even though shoppers on Fifth Avenue were running a full-court press, very few were dropping in to finger the hundred-per-cent merino wool two-button Henley sweaters embroidered with the N.B.A. insignia or the porcelain Detroit Pistons Christmas ornaments or the three-hundred-and-fifty-dollar Swarovski crystal-studded Chicago Bulls business-card case or the New Jersey Nets luggage



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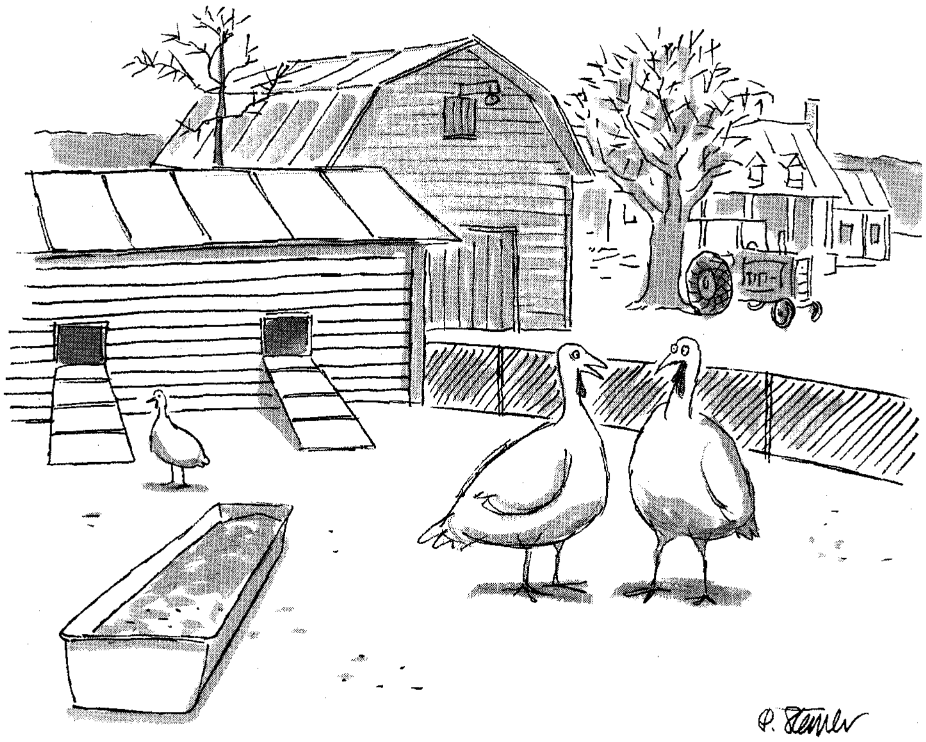

"I like it best after the holidays, when the crowds are gone."

• •

tags or any of the Galoob's Poseable Action Figures—not a soul interested in a posable (but inactive) Rocket or Knick or Timberwolf.

Store employees were as circumspect as sports agents when it came to talking about the basketball season or lack thereof. "Uh, let me think a minute," a salesclerk in the N.B.A. outerwear section said when asked how the basketball lockout was affecting the store. "I am pretty sure, I think, that there are certain, like, topics that we're not exactly supposed to talk about, and that's, I believe, one of them. Maybe you should ask my manager."

"You know what, though?" said another clerk, who was standing nearby dribbling an official available-for-purchase N.B.A. basketball. "No offense, but a lot of the tourists that come in here, they're from other countries, and they don't even realize that we're not playing ball." On the lower level of the store—where you can shoot an actual basketball at an actual basketball basket and then have an actual conversation with a gigantic-but-actually-life-size video representation of an N.B.A. player—four Japanese adolescents, perhaps mercifully oblivious of the suspension of the season, were playing video basketball (Celtics vs. Lakers, and Pacers vs. Mavericks) on Sony PlayStations. They seemed happy. "Ooooh, that was a very nice pass!" the tallest of the adolescents yelled. "Very nice!" A clerk watching them from a few feet away said, "See? The fans are hanging in there. Morale is really high." Is it any fun to work at an N.B.A. store when, for all intents and purposes, there isn't any N.B.A. right now? "Hey, you tell me," he snorted. "Someone is paying me to stand in this nice place and I can shoot hoops whenever I feel like it—you're telling me that's not fun?"

—Susan Orlean

THE BOARDS

Two stage veterans read Flaubert and Sand's mail.

Irene Worth and Peter Eyre are appearing at the Flea Theatre for a month or so in "Chère Maître," a dramatic reading of letters distilled from the ten-year correspondence between Gustave Flaubert and George Sand. The other evening, Eyre and Worth sat onstage before the show—he upright in a stiff folding chair, she sinking into the velvet couch on which she channels Sand—and talked about the characters they play: Flaubert, ascetic and semantically tortured, who tells Sand, "Living strikes me as a business I wasn't cut out for"; and Sand, zesty and prolific, Flaubert's senior by seventeen years, whose letters tell of wiping her grandchildren's bottoms and stomping around her gardens.

"They are such opposing temperaments," said Eyre, who adapted the letters for the stage, and whose pallor and humor are appropriately Flaubertian. "She is such a yea-sayer, and he is so much the opposite. When their correspondence began, he did not have a great deal of respect for her, and then this great friendship developed. But somehow she goes on being exactly the sort of person she is, and he goes on being exactly the sort of person he is. Then, at the very end, he wrote and complimented her on her work."

"I think that was through love, not admiration," interrupted Worth, who was wearing an Oriental silk blouse and had blond hair. "We can often say to each other, 'You were absolutely divine tonight,' because we adore each other, but we may not actually think it. Though I don't lie to you, Peter, I rush to say."

"Now she tells me," said Eyre.

"When I say it, I mean it," Worth said, firmly.

Flaubert and Sand spent a lot of time in their letters extending pleading invitations to each other to come and visit, but Eyre estimates that they met only twelve times. "She was ready to go anywhere," he said. "But Flaubert said, 'If I came, I would spend the next six months daydreaming about it.' He is the patron saint of writer's block, and so his life became very, very orderly."

"It is the talent," Worth said. "If the talent doesn't come out, you turn into yogurt."

"I know that it is terribly difficult to be a writer, but I think that writers are lucky compared to interpretive artists," Eyre said. "You do a play, and years later you look at the text and you think, God, if only I could do that play now—I

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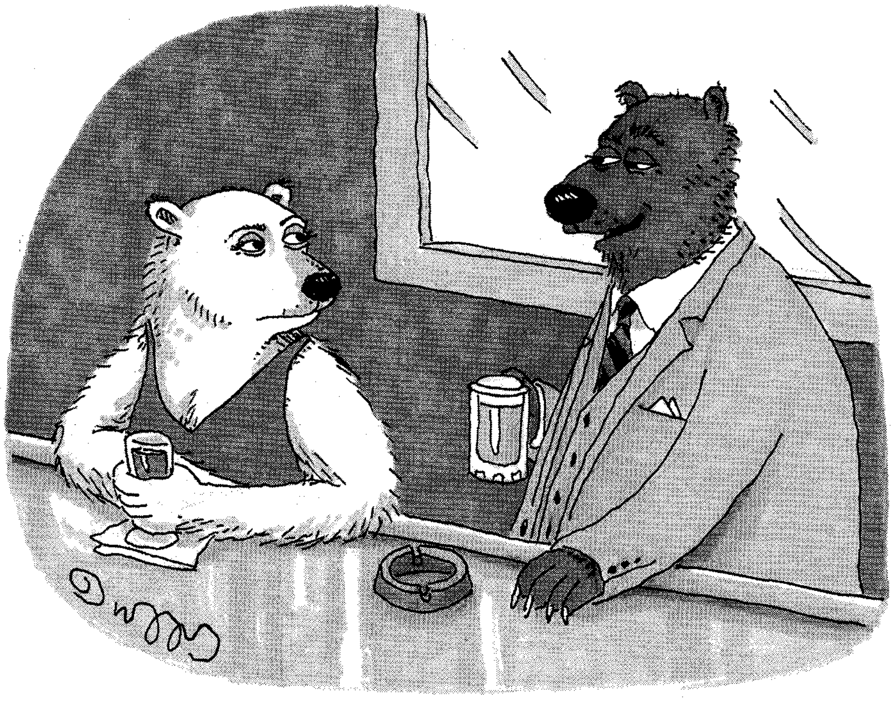
know what it is all about." Eyre said that he feels that way about "Hamlet," in which he appeared more than two decades ago with Worth at the Greenwich Theatre, in London, where they also performed in "The Seagull" and "Ghosts." "I was completely boring in 'Hamlet,'" he said.

"I was the definitively worst Gertrude that ever performed," Worth added. "Categorically."

"But Irene was the definitive Mrs. Alving," Eyre said.

"It is so modern!" Worth said. "Nobody has caught up with Ibsen. And he is always done like brown Windsor soup. I mean, it should be Biedermeier furniture."

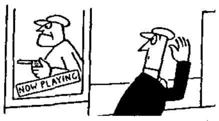
In her letters to Flaubert, George Sand writes of the pleasures of reaching old age. Worth, who is eighty-two—twenty-six years older than Eyre—said that she agreed. "Old age is divine," she said, smiling girlishly and almost batting her eyelashes. "I absolutely adore it. The barriers are down, you don't have to wear the white kid gloves anymore. You find yourself being rather atrocious, and much freer, and you can do some raggedy things." She went on, "I just don't want to act anymore. I am bored blue with acting. There is so much more to life than just one little thing. You can't be a shoemaker all your life." —Rebecca Mead



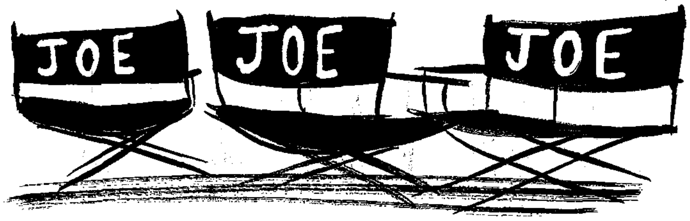
"Polar? Or simply slow to warm?"

THE PICTURES

Joe Average gets his name in lights.



As any parent with school-age children knows, names are subject to fashion, and the source for trendy names is often the movies: there may be five Ariels in your daughter's fourth-grade class, because a character by that name was the heroine of Disney's "The Little Mermaid," in 1989, but just try finding an Ariel in the play group where you deposit your preschooler. (Mulan, anyone?) This season, the movies themselves are following a fad in names. By the end of next month, three movies with "Joe" in their titles will have arrived in the theatres.



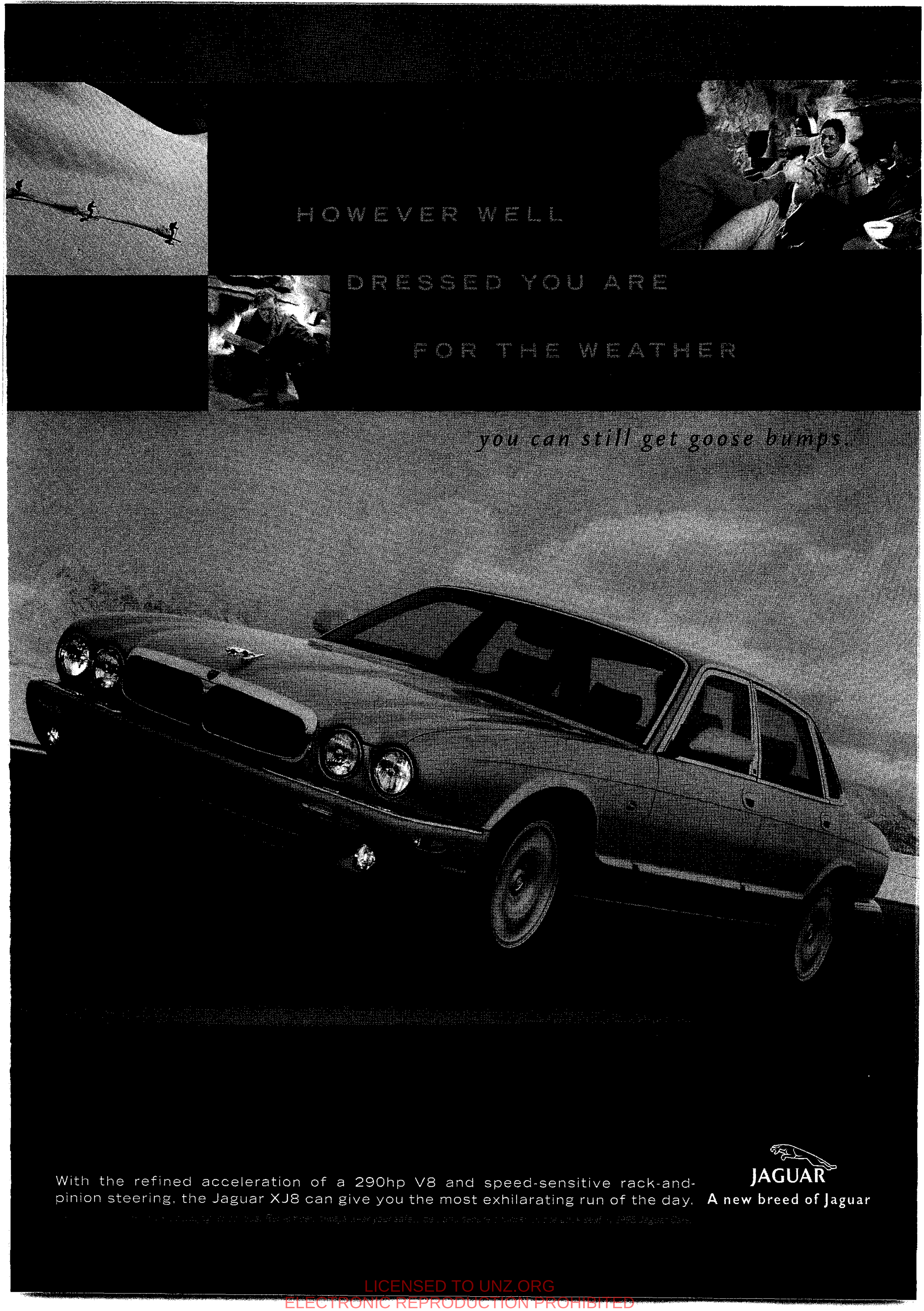
It is tempting to interpret the rash of Joes as an effort to appeal to mainstream tastes; "Joe," after all, connotes middle-of-the-road masculinity—Joe Six-Pack, an average Joe. But red-blooded American males aren't necessarily the target audience for the new movies. For example, Universal's recent box-office disappointment, "Meet Joe Black," a back-from-the-beyond love story starring Brad Pitt, is aimed at women over eighteen, and "My Name Is Joe," due in January from the director Ken Loach, is a gritty art-house picture about a recovering alcoholic in Glasgow—a story not likely to go down well with the character's beer-guzzling real-life counterparts. And although Disney's remake of "Mighty Joe Young," which opens on Christmas Day, does hope to lure regular Joes with a "King-Kong"-ish adventure plot, its marketing plan, according to Terry Curtin, an executive working on publicity for the film, has the whole family in mind.

Curtin isn't worried that audiences will get "Mighty Joe" mixed up with the already panned "Joe Black." "There is a perception that a title matters," she said on the phone the other day. "But what really matters is the images you're bringing people." John Hegeman, who is working on the marketing for "My Name Is Joe," is confident that the educated independent-film audience won't be confused. "Besides, our Joe is the only aptly named one of the current crop," he pointed out. "He's a scrapper."

But why should three studios be facing the "Joe" problem at all, especially given the frequency of last-minute movie-title changes? For instance, Miramax's upcoming "Dancing About Architecture," a contemporary love story set in Los Angeles, recently became "Playing by Heart," after the Motion Picture Association's title-legislation office decided that the original name might flummox moviegoers looking for the Depression-era Irish family drama "Dancing at Lughnasa."

Maybe movie executives are right not to be too concerned that every other release this season is named Joe. In the end, how much a title influences a movie's success remains a mystery. It's another confirmation of William Goldman's famous line about Hollywood: "Nobody knows anything."

—Brendan Lemon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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

THE JUGGLER

The man whose life is up in the air.

BY MARK LEVINE

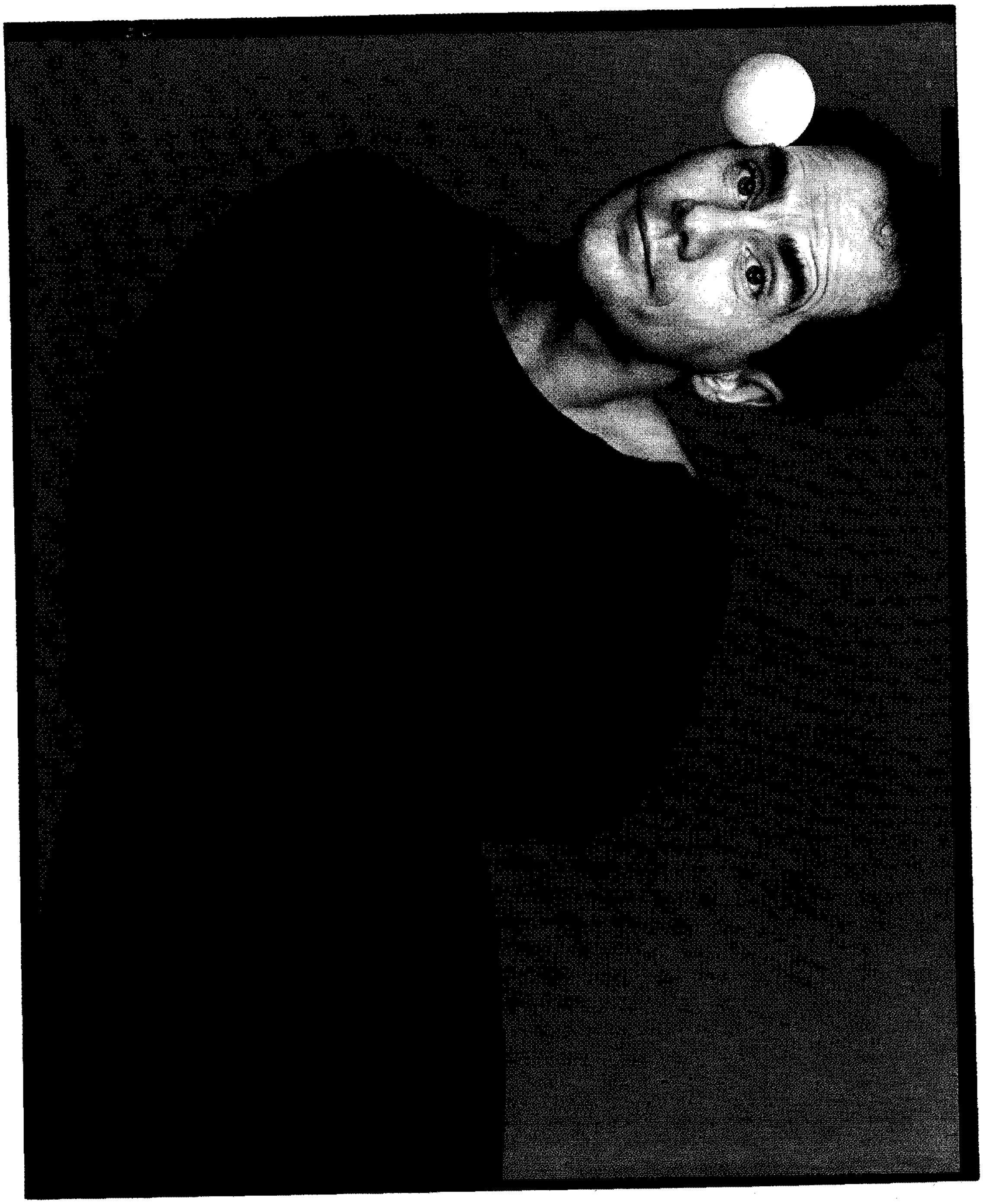
On the day after Halloween, a crowd gathered at an auditorium in Marin County to watch a grown man juggle. The man's name was Michael Moschen. (His surname is pronounced, appropriately, "motion.") In the world of juggling, Moschen is something of a cult figure, and when he emerges from his nearly fanatical juggler's isolation to perform publicly his show almost always sells out. This audience included families with young children, quite a few adolescent males—aspiring jugglers, perhaps—and a clutch of turtleneck-clad types who could be heard murmuring about Moschen's "installation." After the theatre darkened, the curtain rose on the juggler's black-clad figure kneeling on a bare stage in a pool of white light. Electronic music twittered with the sounds of some space-age forest. The sliver of a crescent moon dangled in the background. The juggler stared at his hands with the intensity of a blood-spattered Macbeth.

Each of Moschen's palms held a glowing, lumpy mass, which he seemed to find both fascinating and repellent. Slowly, he parted his hands, and each mass gained clarity until it became a stack of four luminescent balls.

Now the balls began to move, seemingly on their own, crawling over one another, fusing into a cluster, then separating, like molecules in a classroom science display. Moschen watched this activity as if he had just found himself the recipient of an incomprehensible gift. He released the balls, one at a time. They rolled off his fingers with a languid, weighty collapse onto the floor, where they sketched a line between him and the audience. When the juggler leaned toward the balls, the audience leaned, too. Finally, Moschen was left holding a single ball. He rubbed his open palm under the ball, and the ball seemed to float; so did Moschen. Then the ball drifted over his body, gliding along the back of one hand, along an arm, across his chest and neck. The ball was lofted into the air and landed on his forehead, from which it seemed to push him down to the stage. He lay on his back: the ball remained perched on his forehead like the abstract image of a perfectly formed thought. Impishly, the juggler crossed his feet.

Moschen's "crystal ball" piece—the balls were actually made of Lucite—established the tone for a performance that defied all the usual notions of juggling. Typically, jugglers are prized for the dizzying complexity of their feats: the current record in the juggling world is ten balls in the air at once. Moschen, however, was never a show-off. His onstage persona was perplexed, enraged, exhilarated, introverted. Only once during the performance, which lasted ninety minutes, did he assume a conventional juggler's role. In a delightful three-ball-toss routine he demonstrated his mastery of old-fashioned juggling skills; in this context, they seemed as antiquated as rhyme and metre in a chaotic free-verse poem.

Otherwise, Moschen's every move appeared painstakingly choreographed to evoke the experience of spontaneous discovery—as if he were a kind of Chaplinesque Everyman, awakening from turbulent dreams into a land of mysterious things. Early in the show, Moschen encountered a huge, three-dimensional wooden triangle, standing upright and open at the front and back. At first, he retreated from it. Then he came up to it like a child approaching a locked door. He moved around the triangle warily, and stepped inside. With a thrown ball, he began testing the triangle's floor and two walls, swivelling his head in a comical effort to follow the ball through its bounces. Suddenly, he was hurled against one wall by an unexpected ricochet of the ball. He righted himself and added a second ball to his examination of this strange universe.



"I'm a risk-taker," Moschen says. "My job is out there with the fundamental forces." Photograph by Richard Avedon.

He added still another ball to the experiment, throwing and bouncing and catching the balls in increasingly intricate patterns. The percussive rhythm of the balls cast an incantatory spell, a primal, sexually charged call-and-response. Now the juggler was an initiate in an ecstatic ritual. He danced a winsome soft-shoe, all the while bouncing balls and, for good measure, slapping his thighs. Unlike what happens in a conventional magic show, everything Moschen did was exposed and executed without sleight of hand. Nor was there any sense of ironic, postmodern detachment. Moschen struggled as he juggled.

WHEN I arranged to interview Moschen, I prepared myself for someone who probably had pet names for his favorite balls and spoke with the aid of a hand puppet. However, it soon became apparent that Moschen's inner child is carefully held in check when he's not onstage. Indeed, for a man whose work seems intent on reconnecting adults with their impulse to play he came across as oddly tense and mirthless. After one of his shows, he led me backstage to his dressing room, where he kept the balls in cloth pouches, grouped according to their age. The newer ones have a brighter bounce, he explained, but their lustre can challenge his grip, given the fact that his hands sweat a great deal. Moschen proceeded to peel off his snug black costume and stand naked before me, all the while evaluating his performance, which he believed had been excellent, despite incompetence on the part of the theatre's technical crew. He was decidedly not

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childlike in speech and manner—"It's hard enough to do this work without people fucking up all around me," he said, glaring—although pale skin, red lips, a puggish nose, and bushy eyebrows made him look a bit like a prematurely aged child. He is forty-three, and has the crooked front teeth and deeply lined brow of a scary clown. He has what he called "a nineteenth-century body"—thick torso and thighs, short, powerful arms—whose low center of gravity he described as "perfect for a juggler." His fingers were stubby; his hands looked like the heads on a pair of mallets.

Moschen, as he continued to strut around the dressing room, was charming, blustery, defensive. "One of the things that's so great about my work," he said, "is knowing that nobody's done it before." Indeed, most of his press attention has been concerned with trying to define what, exactly, he does. He has been labelled a movement artist, a sculptor in motion, a dancer-physicist, a performance artist, a new vaudevillian; his work has been likened to magic, poetry, dance, Japanese theatre, and clowning. Paul Shullenburger, the program coördinator of the MacArthur Foundation, which in 1990 granted one of its five-year fellowships to Moschen—the only juggler ever so honored—had told me, "It was clear to everybody that 'juggler' was not the right word for him, though we didn't know what the word was." Booking agents don't know how to market Moschen. Since he launched his solo career, ten years ago, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, he has appeared at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, on the Maury Povich show, before an audience of M.I.T. physicists, with the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, and in front of more fidgety five-year-olds than most kindergarten teachers have. He keeps himself financially afloat by occasionally giving lucrative private performances at meetings of large corporations. This month, Moschen will bring his show to the Kitchen, in Manhattan—a haven for experimental performance.

In any context, Moschen's impulse remains the same: to demonstrate, wordlessly, the privileged access that shape and play have to our inner lives. "Philosophically, I believe I reach across all times in my work," Moschen told me. "I believe that the work should be able to communicate to anyone of any age and any culture. But I don't want to be user-friendly with my spirit." A few years ago, during the intermission at a Moschen performance, I had run into Ricky Jay, the éminence grise of magic. Jay had characterized Moschen as "the greatest conceptual juggler of all time" but had declined to elaborate. "What I say to my friends is 'Go see this man,'" he said. "And when they ask what he does I say, 'Just go.'"

MOSCHEN was born in the industrial town of Greenfield, in western Massachusetts, where his father, the son of Italian immigrants, worked as a machinist in a tool factory and occupied himself with stonemasonry on weekends. Recently, over dinner in New York, Moschen recalled his father as "a physical force, a force of nature, who could make the most beautiful things with his hands." The family lived in a public-housing project, and from the age of four Moschen would retreat with his father to a field behind their building to drive golf balls. Moschen learned early to wield influence over balls with the mind-set of an artisan. "Golf is an endless series of repetitions and minute adjustments and rhythms," he said. "I would go off for hours and hours and practice. There's so much articulation you can develop to manipulate the ball low or high, or to hook it or draw it or fade it or bore it into the wind or put a spin on it." Golf, he added, "helped me learn the *feel* of something right. You can't teach that. I don't know why I was so enamored with the sense of being at one with the ball. I had Zen experiences as a kid, so, as an adult, I gravitated toward finding philosophical unity with something." Which is to say that he gave up golf and started juggling.

When Moschen was twelve, he and his older brother, Colin, came upon a book in the Greenfield Public Library that described the fundamentals of toss-juggling. They set themselves the task of learning to perform the basic techniques: the cascade, the shower, the fountain, each of which is distinguished by its own pattern of throwing and catching, and each of which acknowledges that juggling is about unleashing the fluid possibilities of solid objects. The brothers recruited a partner, Penn Jillette, who is now famous as half of the Penn & Teller performance duo; he was Mosch-

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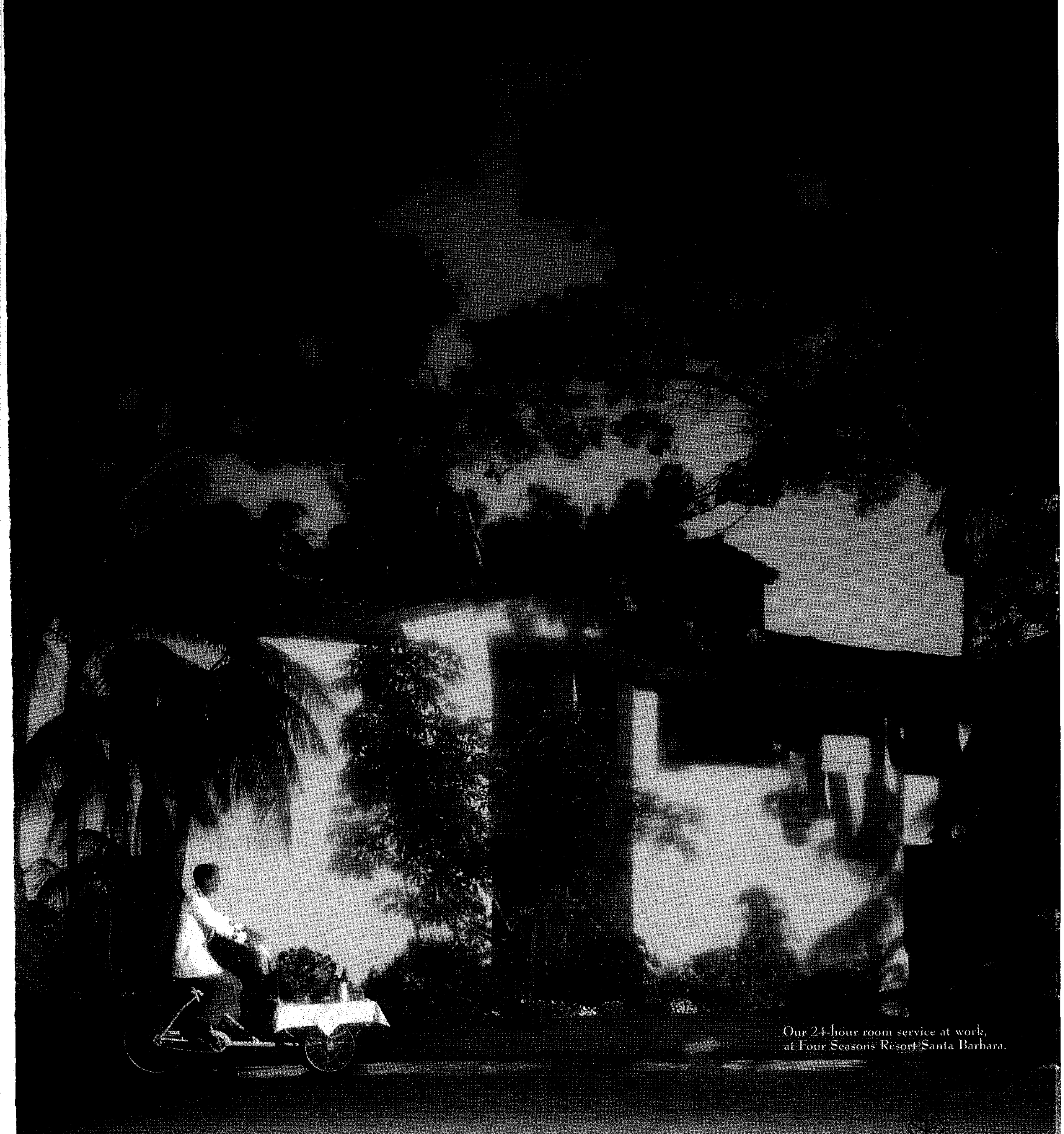

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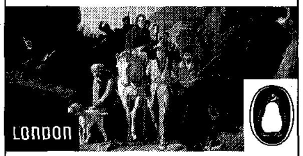

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Jillette recalls, "As kids we practiced in the way that only youngsters who've learned that you can't masturbate twenty-four hours a day can practice: 'Let's see if I can do a straight cascade ten thousand times without dropping.' The only place we could juggle was in my parents' basement—once you start juggling it's made clear that you're not to enter the rest of the house. We decided that we wanted to juggle at the Y.M.C.A. We got permission to use the place in exchange for doing a few shows a year at the girls' overnight gatherings. We looked on it as a sacred duty. We called ourselves the Toss-Ups, and wore tight white jeans and colorful T-shirts. I thought we were doing Lenny Bruce. Mike must have thought we were doing Baryshnikov."

After high school, Moschen hitchhiked around the country, stopping a few times to work as an apprentice potter and as a carpenter. He and Jillette became reunited a year later, in 1975, and while other ambitious teen-agers were attending college the two of them spent a year juggling at the Great Adventure amusement park, in Jackson, New Jersey, where they pulled down three hundred dollars a week. "Our group was called the Tumescos—Latin for 'hard-ons,'" Jillette said. "We wore black gloves. We were astonishingly good. We lived in New York, with Teller and my girlfriend, and we practiced eight hours a day. I think we were the first act to pass nine clubs—fibreglass clubs, very expensive, our pride and joy." It was a late-adolescent reverie that couldn't last. Their act was silent, and Jillette couldn't stay silent for long. Moschen, on the other hand, was already drawn toward exploring the less conventional dimensions of his talent. "We don't see each other much anymore," Jillette told me, "but when we do Mike plays the sensitive cloistered artist and I play the show-biz guy." Moschen told me, "Penn knew early on that his future lay with his mouth and his mind. I knew mine lay with my body and my mind."

In the uncatalogued attic of juggling relics, pride of place is occupied by a chipped Theban clay sculpture from around 200 B.C. that depicts a figure balanced on one leg, with one ball lodged on the figure's raised knee, another ball displayed in the palm of its hand, and a third perched on its head. Watching Moschen prance across the stage, swallowed up by the gyrations of an outrageously large aluminum hoop, I pondered the eternal appeal of juggling—a practice that, according to its devotees, has been around as long as any known language. It isn't simply that jugglers can do things that other people can't, I thought, but that jugglers are a peculiarly apt embodiment of the human effort to cope gracefully with more demands, from more directions, than one person can reasonably be expected to manage. The way juggling invites multiple afflictions to rain down on the practitioner, in the form of nasty, mocking toys, might, I decided, be what lies behind the sadness of the prototypical juggler. A few days after the show, I discovered in an obscure volume of juggling lore a photograph of Enrico Rastelli, the most legendary juggler of the twentieth century. He was caught in a pose that might have pleased Beckett: Rastelli stands, ostrichlike, on one leg, with a large ball balanced on the top of each foot, one on his bent knee, one in each hand, and one on top of his head. A stick extends from his mouth, and a ball perches on the end of the stick, balancing yet another stick, which is balancing yet another ball. The juggler looks like a human house of cards. When Rastelli died, of mysterious causes, in 1931, his funeral was attended by thousands of mourners.

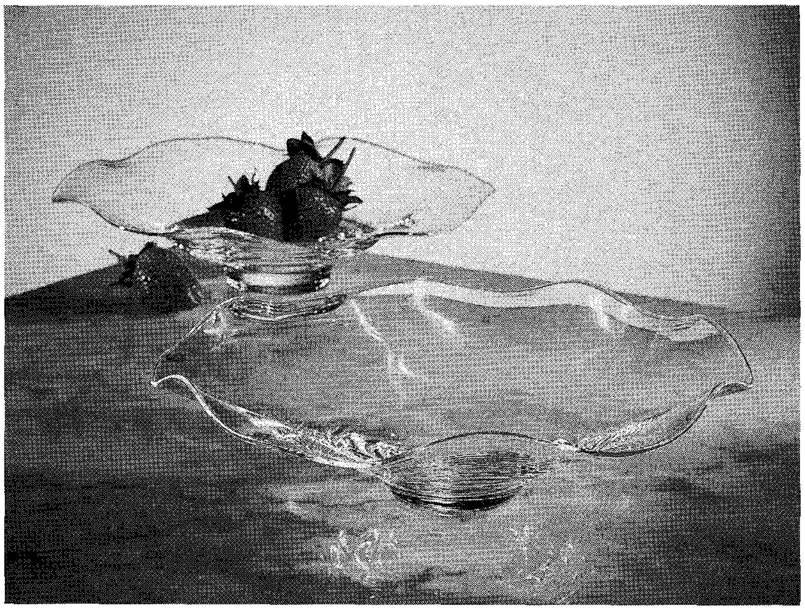
Most jugglers, Moschen told me, tread a thin line between a craving for adulation and a fear of humiliating failure. "A juggler is not a secure person," he said. "A juggler, by definition, *should* be an insecure person." The exhilaration of a breathtaking performance can be shattered in an instant by the dreaded "drop." When that happens, the deflation of the audience, and of the juggler, is palpable. Unlike an actor, who can cover up a missed line, or a dancer, whose misstep might seem choreographed, a juggler who has lapsed has no place to hide. Moschen, who tends to acknowledge the occasional drop by gazing querulously at the wayward ball, claims not to be averse to being exposed as mortal. "If you want to get anywhere you have to embrace failure, not flee from it," he said. "I'm not scared of anything. There are a lot of jugglers who work for that house in Florida when they retire, or for that steady paycheck in Las Vegas, or for taking a cute idea, making it into an act, and repeating it forever. That's not who I am. I'm a risk-taker. My job is out there with the fundamental forces."

Sam Kilbourn is the chairman of the International Jugglers' Association, a fifty-two-year-old organization whose members take a pledge "to render assistance to fellow-jugglers." He speaks enthusiastically of the surge in popularity that juggling has achieved in the last decade or so. Kilbourn, who is also a real-estate lawyer in South Portland, Maine, and a juggler, acrobat, and clown who occasionally goes by the stage name Sam Sillystuff, describes in rhapsodic terms "the empowerment, the rush of being able to do things that you can't explain." He told me, "Juggling is a right-brain activity that involves letting yourself go, letting things happen. To make three balls go around with two hands is so contrary to reason that it just makes you giggle. It's achieving the impossible. It's mystical."

In Europe, juggling remains connected with a centuries-old tradition of circus arts, which tends to promote family dynasties of jugglers. In America, it has been estimated that there are more than a million juggling enthusiasts, who are in it more for the athletics than for the artistry. Kilbourn said that American juggling tends to be free-form, not straitjacketed by tradition. "When I got involved in juggling, in the late seventies," he told me, "it was all balls, rings, clubs, and cigar boxes. Now anything goes."

One evening after a performance, Moschen told me, "Jugglers are usually stupid. Most of them are in juggling because they want to show off. Most of them juggle to compensate for what's lacking in their personality." Later, Moschen elaborated, "Instead of juggling, they should go back and examine the ways their mothers and fathers messed them up. It's obvious that a lot of juggling is a channelling of sexual frustration. It's rare that you'll see a female juggler, and it's really rare that you'll see an attractive female juggler."

Nonetheless, the displays of control which are the hallmark of juggling come in a delirious variety of forms. Among subtypes of juggling found in circus shows are juggling on horseback and strong-man juggling with iron balls. Jugglers known as "antipodists" lie on their backs and juggle with their



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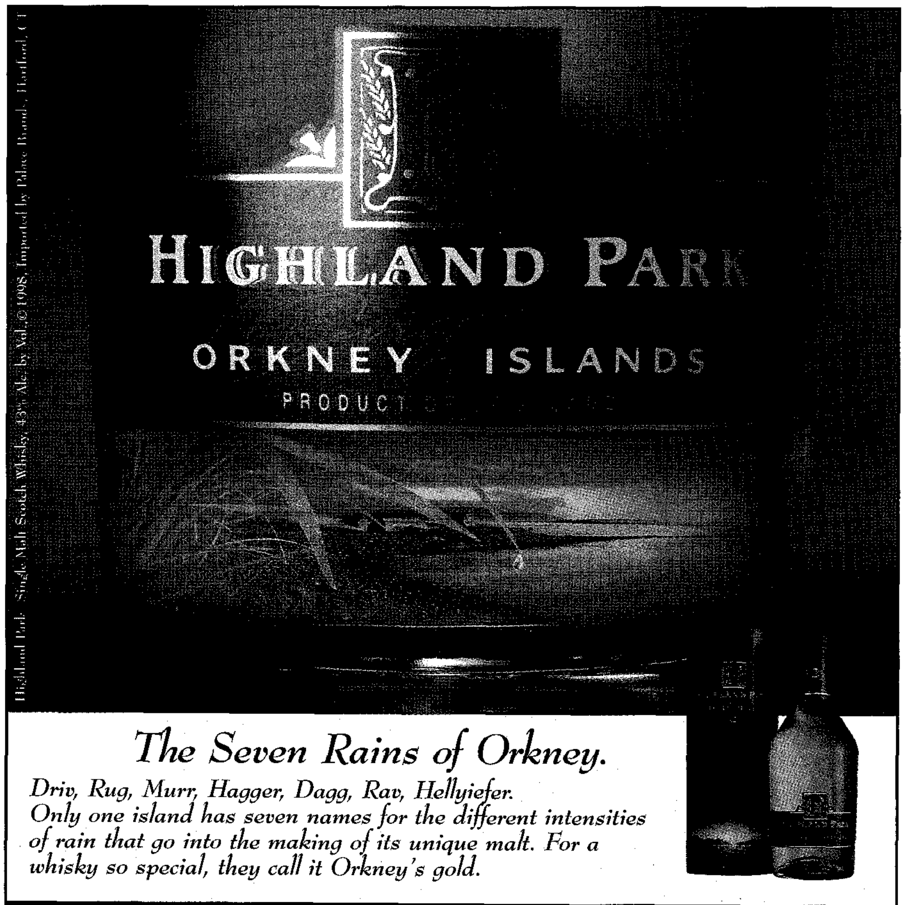

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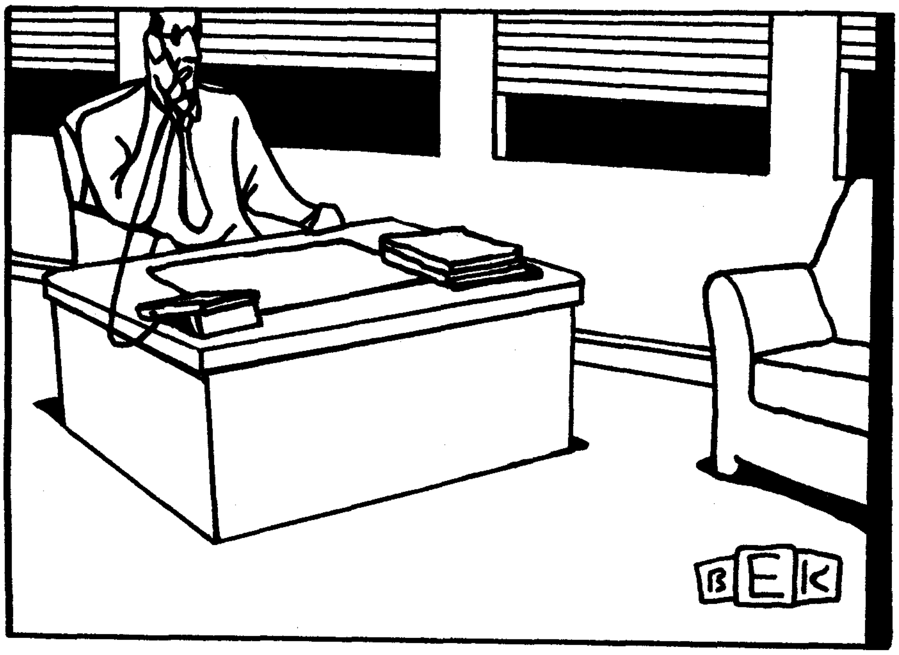

"This isn't a hasty decision. A lot of daydreaming went into it."

feet; sometimes they juggle other jugglers with their feet. Vaudeville, which still influences the antics of jugglers like the Flying Karamazov Brothers and Avner the Eccentric, introduced "gentleman jugglers," who strove to maintain their dignity while juggling umbrellas, walking sticks, hats, and cigars.

Jugglers are ubiquitous. In the course of my research, I read about a Social Security pensioner in Utah who juggles chainsaws, pitchforks, samurai swords, and garden rakes. A runner once completed the Los Angeles marathon in just over four hours, juggling three balls the whole way, with nary a drop. "We're all sort of nuts to be doing this," Sam Kilbourn admits. He tells me that he wears garishly mismatched socks beneath his lawyer-style trousers, and keeps a squeaker in his pocket. "I squeak all the time," he says.

How did Moschen, more than any previous juggler, discover within this often ignoble practice the means of creating startling allegorical theatre? Partly, it was a matter of good timing. In the late seventies, the discourse on "high" and "low" art was becoming a fashionable exercise, and mainstream audiences welcomed the refreshment offeredby fringe entertainers. Soon, a vogue emerged for the kinds of performers who might have been relegated to night clubs and children's birthday parties. Absurdist clowns like Bill Irwin and satirical magicians like Penn & Teller were praised by highbrow critics; circuses like Quebec's Cirque du Soleil and New York's Big Apple Circus (of which Moschen was an original member) revived the flagging peanuts-and-sawdust image of the big top with witty, high-concept shows that didn't leave children wailing in the face of sedated elephants, and were sophisticated enough for adults. By 1977, Moschen, who had thought of himself as an "artist" even when he was juggling for handouts from tourists on the steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, had found himself shuttling between the Big Apple Circus tent in Battery Park and the stage of City Center, where he performed a nimble fire-swinging and juggling piece for the Louis Falco Dance Company. The more seriously Moschen was regarded, the more seriously he regarded himself. "The most interesting part of my work," he solemnly told me, "is learning how to touch an object, and discovering how the objects give up their secrets. What I'm after is the essential spiritual magnetism of a shape."

In the late seventies, frustrated with his inability to overcome the limitations of throwing and catching, Moschen retreated to a farmhouse in northern Vermont, where he intended to ponder his future as a juggler. While he was there, he received news that his older sister, who had just adopted two children, had been found to have a brain tumor. "We were all sure she was going to die," Moschen recalls. "They told her she'd be walking around, she'd get a bad headache, and then she'd be dead. It turned out they were wrong, but I couldn't hide behind bullshit or mere skill anymore. The point was to open myself to vulnerability. I dedicated myself to that."

He decided to go back to his beginnings as a juggler—to the time before he had gained facility in handling objects—and to shed from his work anything that could be construed as inessential or showy. The celebrated German juggler Francis Brunn advised him to "find a way to get inside the ball." Moschen devoted himself to studying and mastering the repertoire of single-ball techniques, in order to learn how to *touch* one ball rather than throwing many. "I made a rule," he says, "that I would never close my hand around the ball, that I would always keep my hand open. It's virtually impossible to have real control over an object if you're doing that. It was the most difficult choice I could make, because it's the opposite of what a juggler is supposed to do. It offers only vulnerability." Moschen told me that this technique, which underlies his crystal-ball piece, taught him that juggling could be less about control than about the struggle to accept the fear and turmoil surrounding uncontrollable events, like his sister's illness.

Recently, while Moschen and I were taking the Metro North train to his home—he lives in northwestern Connecticut—he spoke of his father's death, last year, from Parkinson's disease, and told me that his mother was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. "It's an awful irony," he said, "that my father, who was such a physically vital man, should wither away to the point where all he could do was blink his eyelids, and that my mother, who was the intellectual center of my family, should have lost her mind. I can't bear to visit her. She doesn't recognize me."

The last time I had visited him at his house, he was living with his wife of eleven years, Danielle, a painter and teacher whose father is Norman Mailer. Now she and their nine-year-old daughter, Isabella, had moved out. The place was scantily furnished; the refrigerator

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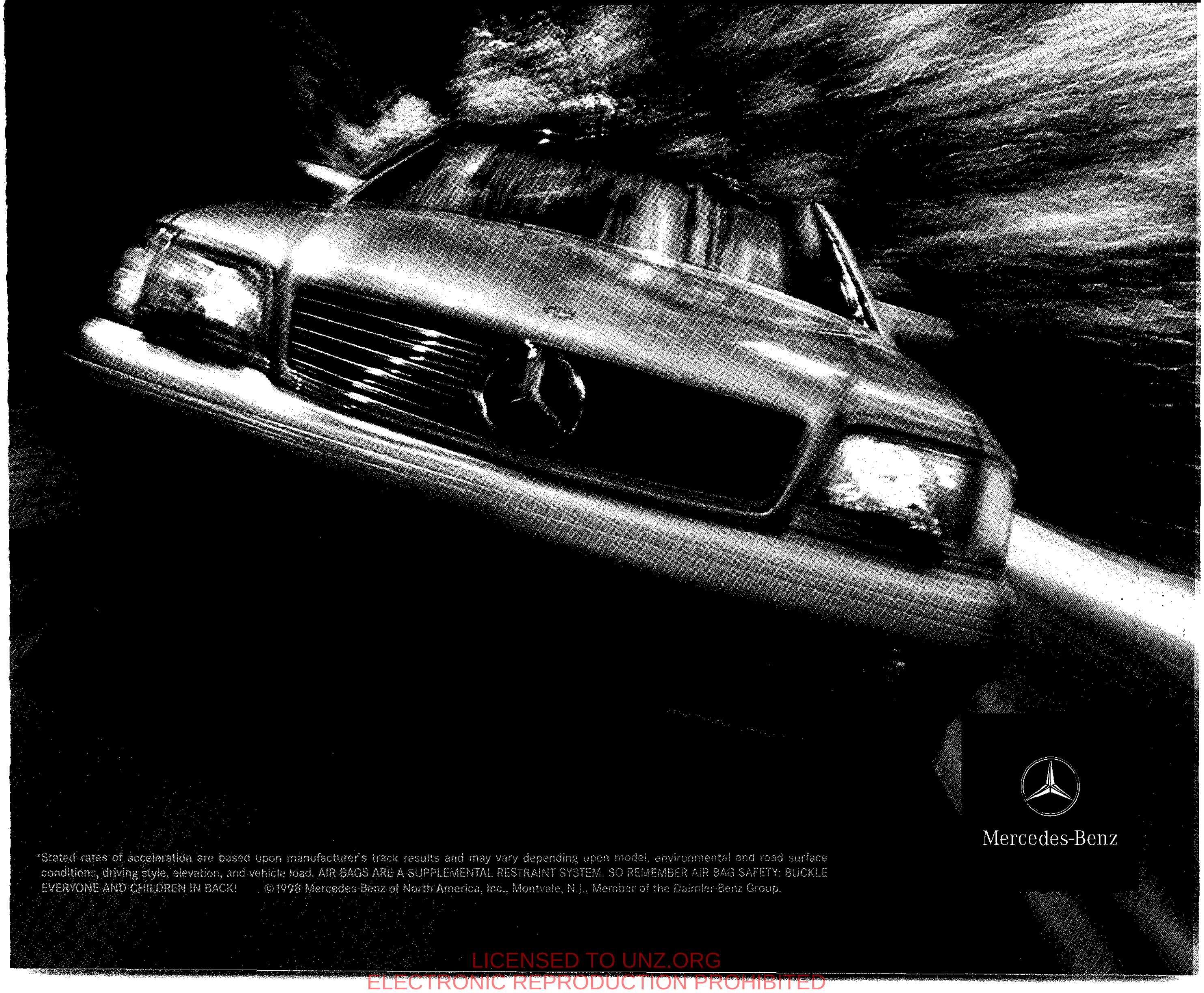

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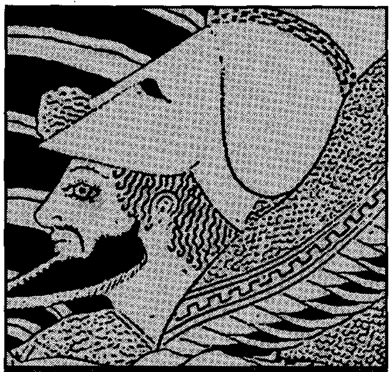

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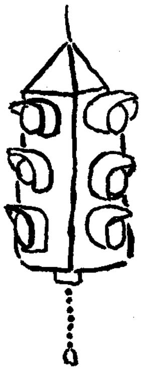
was empty; mail was piled on the dining table; and a layer of cat hair covered the floor of wide planks. "This is a whole new lifetime for me," Moschen said. "I'm forty-three, and half my life is over. I've got to justify my existence again. I'd like to be optimistic about what lies ahead, but sometimes it's hard to do the work when you wake up in the morning heartbroken."

The juggler's lair is a lavender-trimmed frame house that contrasts whimsically with its staid white clapboard neighbors. It stands on five acres of unmanicured grounds that look like an exuberant scrap yard. One morning, we wandered across the shaggy lawns and past a stagnant pond and a sagging stone fence, taking note of assorted disused and resurrected objects scattered about—enormous wooden spools, a pile of cracked bowling pins, a purple fuel tank, a tub holding gold Ping-Pong balls. A huge aluminum ball, painted white, sat on the front lawn. Moschen, who said that he spent a fair amount of time scrounging in the local dump, referred to these assemblages as "studies" that play an essential part in his creative process. He pointed out that it often takes him years of practice to perfect the techniques he uses in his shows. Rarely can he produce more than a few seconds of stage material in a day, though he broods about his work constantly. "I'm so committed to the honesty of the process that I don't have any boundaries," he said. "I mean, it's hard to admit, but I was willing to lose my marriage over it."

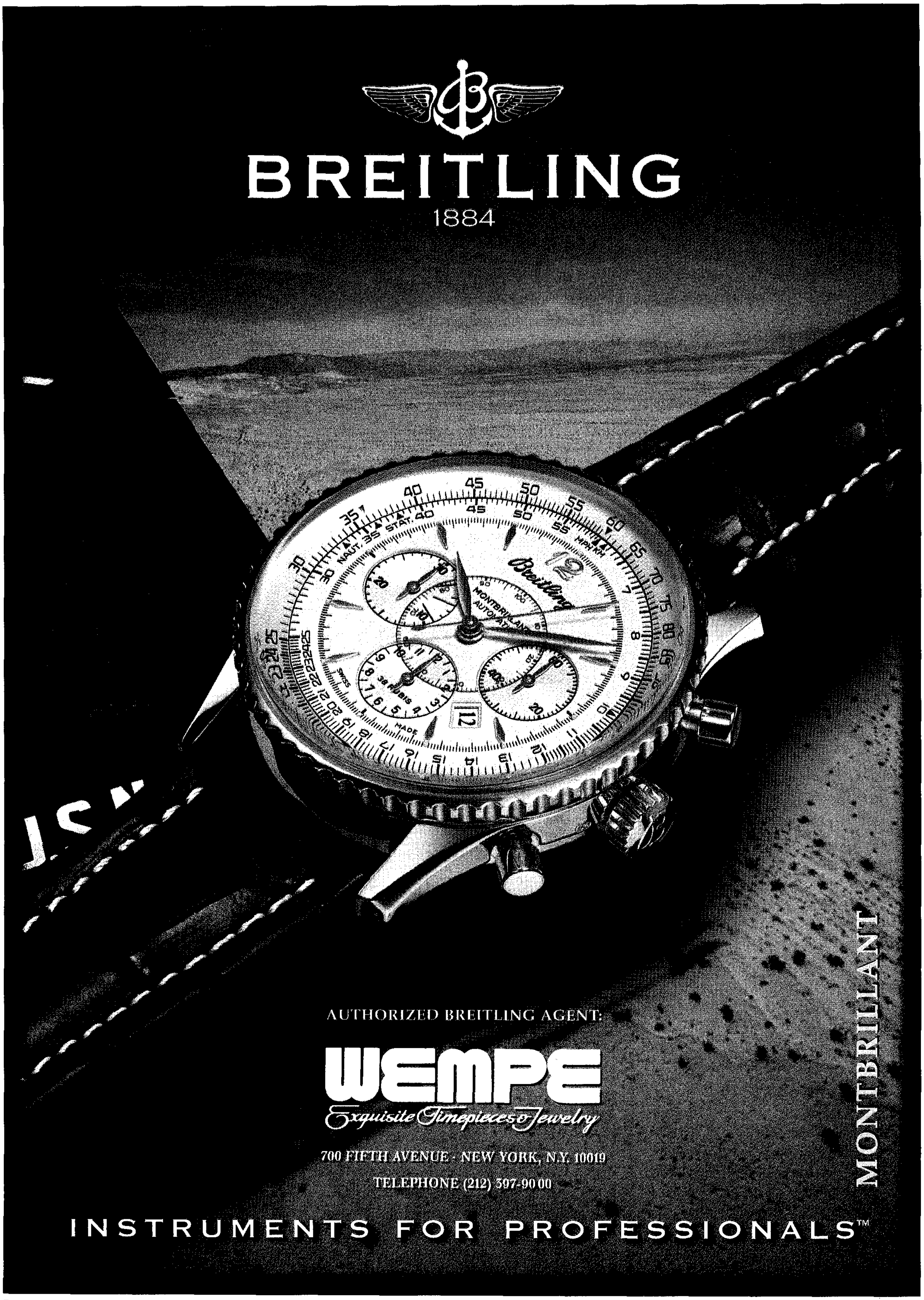


Moschen showed me a studio he had recently finished building, next to the house. Its upper level is a juggler's dream rehearsal space—a thousand square feet of open floor beneath a nineteen-foot ceiling. Downstairs were shelves filled with notes for projects at various stages of completion. There were binders marked "Ferns," "Shapes," "Animals," and "Marbles in Glass Containers," and filing cabinets crammed with photographs, drawings, and magazine clippings—all relevant, he said, to his work. He told me that right now he was in the midst of working out a long-standing obsession with what he calls his "staircase piece"—a "parable" about ascending and descending which was inspired by boyhood memories of watching steps disappear and reappear on an escalator. Most of Moschen's material is drawn from private memories that, while they are never explicitly identified, become part of the work's emotional resonance. Another current idea, he said, was to portray a juggler who changes identities rapidly. He explained, "My father is dead. My mother doesn't know who I am. My wife has left me. Sometimes I don't know who I am anymore."

Back in the main house, he led me to the basement. There he handed me a large aluminum square that had been bent into a wavelike shape. A few years ago, he had created an act for Cirque du Soleil in which a trio of jugglers swivelled similar pieces of aluminum, while rolling balls on them, then tossed the balls high into the air and caught them on the panels. (The piece had to do with setting off on a sea voyage, Moschen said.) Like all his work, it was a great deal harder to perform than it looked—as I realized when I tried to manipulate the panel. The size of it required a difficult extension of my arms, and its corners clipped my chin and neck on each revolution. Moschen's wife Danielle had told me that once, while developing the technique, "Michael came up from the basement with a hole in the center of his chest. He was bleeding, and he didn't even notice it."

"There's always pain involved in my work," Moschen said. "I have to take myself to extremes."

ONE evening, we stood on his front porch, and Moschen delighted his dog, a German shepherd named Rosie, by flinging a collapsed soccer ball into the darkness and cheering her as she retrieved it, again and again. "Why should I have to defend juggling as commensurate with other art forms?" he said. "Just spend a day watching people the way I do and then tell me that juggling isn't as relevant as the other arts. Look at how people relate to the space around them, how they approach the problem of shaping their world, of clearing a path in front of them." He added, "I love the way Rosie loves her little deflated ball. It's not a ball anymore, it's a companion." When I asked if he ever had dreams about juggling, he replied, "No, my work is my dream. I dream in my work." ♦



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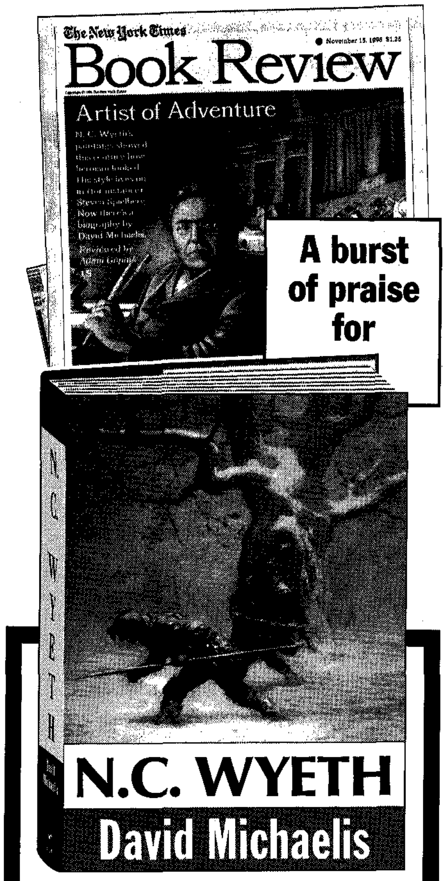

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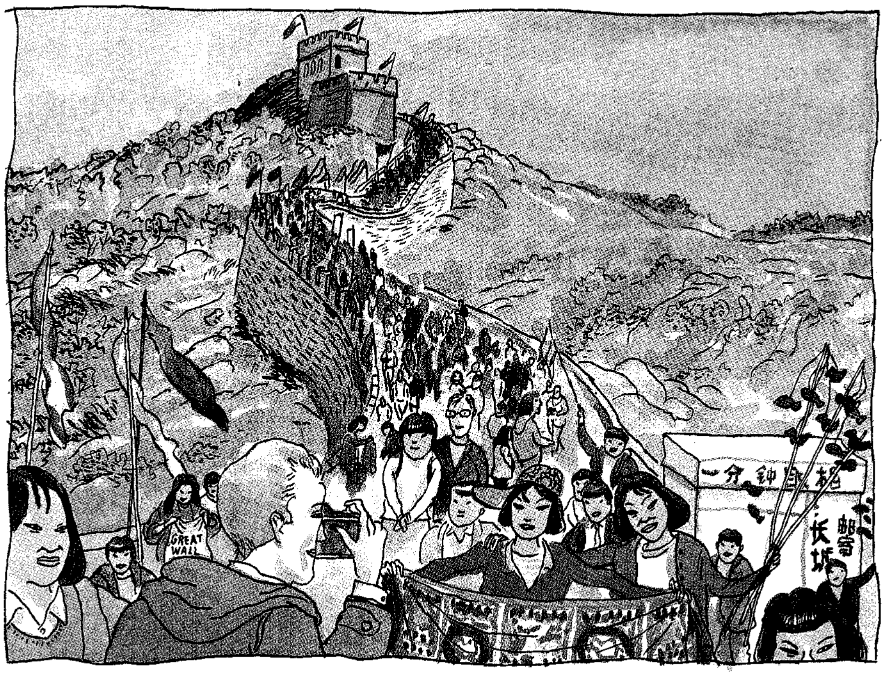
PERSONAL HISTORY

BACK FROM CHINA

The trip that shrank the author's world.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

"WHERE are the people?" my wife asked, looking around the Delta terminal at Kennedy Airport. We had disembarked from a thirteen-hour flight from Tokyo, after three weeks of a sightseeing tour in China organized by the Smithsonian Institution. We were so little used to handling our own luggage—we would set it outside the door of our hotel room at an appointed hour, and it would magically reappear in our next hotel, in Wuhan or Chongqing, Shanghai or Guilin—that we had made a botch of getting it from the terminal containing Japan Airlines to the adjacent one, holding Delta, from which we would fly to Boston. The two heaviest suitcases had wheels on them; we had dragged them outside into the fall-tinged American sunlight, an Occidental version of the Friday noon we had left behind a half day ago in Japan, and set off up an empty and unpromising sidewalk. In the distance, a sparkling wire fence apparently barred our progress. Cars and buses poured by, but there was not a soul to ask guidance of. Improvising (after all, whose country was this?), we went down some steps to a lower roadway. Its sidewalk was scarcely two feet wide and shortly petered out in drifts of last winter's road sand. The wheels of our suitcases became mired; I seized their handles and struggled up an enigmatic asphalt hill, beyond which the Delta terminal loomed like a fortress without visible entrance. The "Push" button at a stoplight didn't function; tired of jabbing it, we jaywalked, with our unaccustomed burdens, and ascended to glass doors that said "First Class Passengers Only." We were strictly Business. We finally found a door that we were permitted to use, secreted at an oblique angle in the towering façade. It yielded, surprisingly, to our pressure, and three desultory security personnel interrupted their lively chat in Spanish to give our bags a grudging pass through the X-ray machine. On the other side, in a large polished space with an off-center air of having just turned its back, not a single sign, nor a single other pedestrian, offered to direct



In going to China there was "an aspect of danger, of diving into a darkness."

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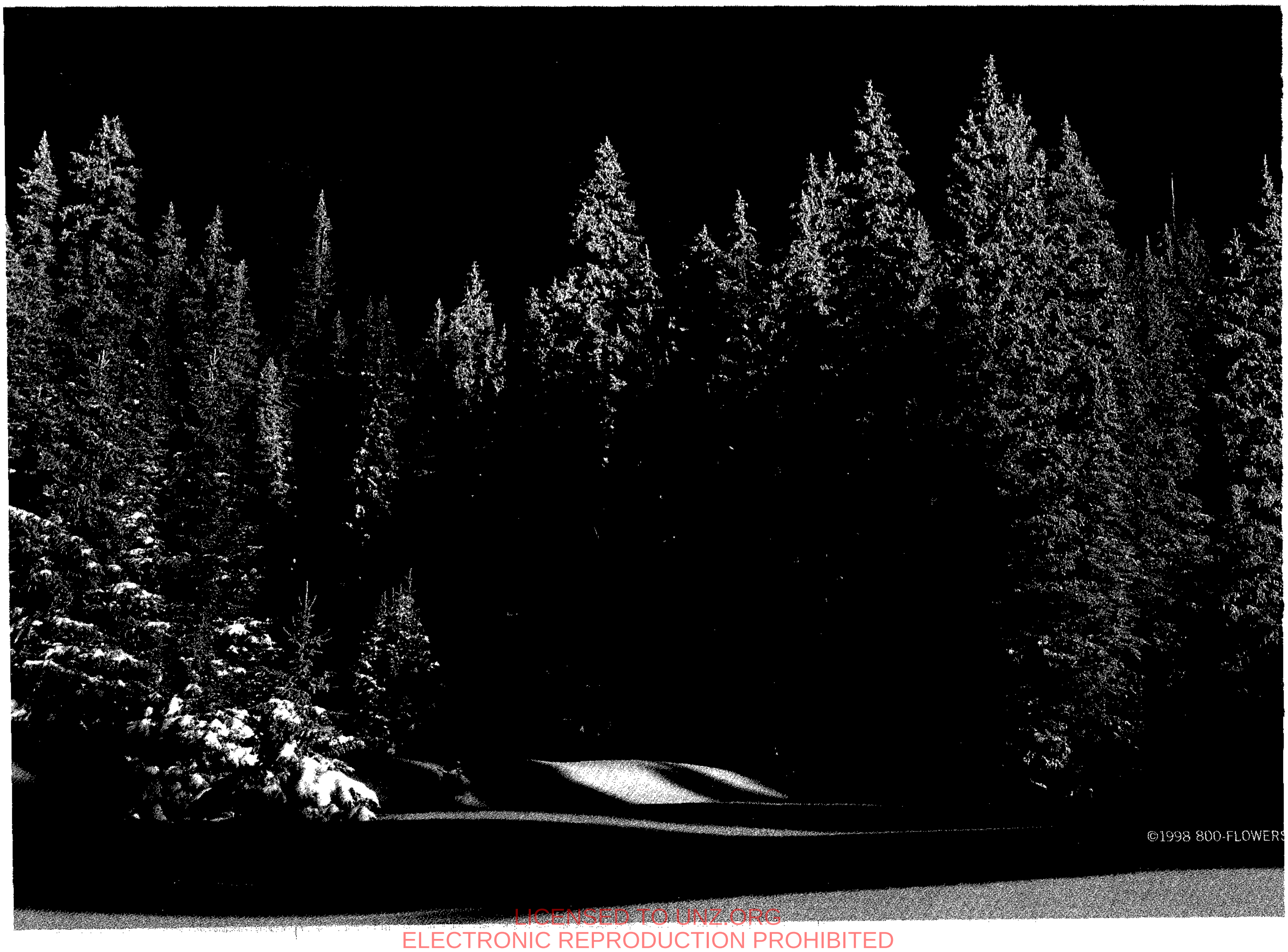
our steps. There were shops, but no one, shortly after noon, seemed to be in them; there were airline counters, but they were unmanned. I thought of Simone de Beauvoir's words on the Forbidden City: "This palace, in which not one dated memory is inscribed, strikes me as the unalterable seat of an unalterable institution and not the dwelling place of men who were one time alive." My wife asked me her question. I couldn't answer. The United States was a country with some amenities but inconveniently devoid of people.

ARRIVING at the Beijing airport more than three weeks before, by way of the immaculate modernity of Japan Airlines, had been quite different. There were uneven linoleum floors, an earthy smell, an excited human clatter, a certain amount of physical horseplay. Jokes were being shouted, an exhilaration being shared. Chinese laughter had a harsh boom to it, and the spoken language a certain bark. The qualities that the Chinese, in their global diaspora, project—intelligence, diligence, a concentrated quiet and canny reserve—did not, apparently, obtain on their native soil. In this first glimpse, they appeared to be what my father would have called "full of fun," as his own generation of raccoon-coated, Prohibition-mocking Americans had been. Chinese and Americans both, after all, enjoy the satisfactions of national largeness—one nation the most populous, the other the richest—and the benefits of a revolution that proclaimed all men equal. The Chinese seemed happy.

The captain of the boat, the S.S. Splendid, that for four days cruised us up the Yangtze, from Wuhan to Chongqing, seemed happy, as well he might have been, having begun his nautical career as a boy in 1945 and seen it continue through unimaginable national vicissitudes since. "*Ganbei!*" he shouted, meaning "Bottoms up!," as, at our first dinner, he made the rounds of the tables, toasting each one. He was drinking tea, we were told for our peace of mind, and not the potent plum brandy we were served. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm he brought to this ceremonial duty, which he presumably performed at the beginning and end of every voyage, was infectious, and the speeches of welcome and farewell he delivered, in a voice that treated the microphone like a megaphone, must have been perfect of their kind. The passengers at his table asked, through a translator, questions about navigating the recently flooded Yangtze, which he answered efficiently; but the journey of his long career remained mysterious. Had there been cruises in 1947, with civil war raging? In 1967, with the Cultural Revolution raging? Who, until the new China opened itself to us Western tourists, had been his passengers? We had to make do with the evident fact of his happiness. His female serving crew, entertaining us with the dances of some of China's fifty-three (or fifty-four, or fifty-five, depending on which guide you were listening to) ethnic minorities, were as slender as Paris models, whose deadpan, stalking manner they amusingly parodied in one number. Cherry,



the very lovely cruise hostess, bravely wrestled with the English language, having especial difficulty (as I myself have) with "right" and "left." "Wish you a good health," the bathroom scale in our cabin said. On a railing at the bow was solicitously lettered "Aware Horn." It was some horn, sounded often in the mists of the Yangtze as we picked our way through the three famous gorges. The floods had subsided; the river was getting low. When the horn sounded, you tingled from the top of your skull down to the soles of your feet.

Kathy, the guide on our bus in Beijing, was also happy. Fluent, pretty, she was fond of teasing us with lessons in Chinese and riddles in English. ("What was Beethoven doing in the cemetery? Decomposing!") As the days went on, and we headed wearily back to dinner from the Forbidden City or the Summer Palace or the Temple of Heaven, she relaxed into accounts of her life: how she didn't date until she was twenty-three ("Late!" she admitted, with one of her sudden dazzling smiles) and how neighborhood watchdogs ("Old people, retired") monitor behavior. When she was asked to contrast her own childhood with that of her adolescent daughter, she replied promptly, "The difference between hell and heaven." She had basically raised herself, on bread and water, while her grandparents, in those years of the Cultural Revolution, labored penitentially in the countryside and her parents, consigned to factory work, spent additional hours attending interminable Red Guard-led meetings of exhortation and self-criticism. Her daughter, one of China's many millions of only children, has all the electronic equipment a proper rock fan requires, and dismisses maternal complaints by saying, "You make the money, Mom, so I have to spend it!" Kathy, a former sales manager, makes enough yuan charming busloads of gray-headed English-speakers to own her own car. She allowed that many people still love Mao for the great levellings that ended the worst poverty, but you gathered that it was Deng Xiaoping's liberation into guarded capitalism which inspired her own affection, and that of the countless others able to breathe better if not thrive in the new China.

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The great white mausoleum holding Mao's preserved body sits across Tiananmen Square from the Forbidden City, on the same axial line that passes through the center of the moated imperial rectangle. Even the mole on a giant portrait of Mao that hangs on the other side of the square above the Gate of Heavenly Peace is centered. But Deng, in three-quarters view, smiles genially down from billboards. A two-god system: one to worship, one to obey. The bridge between them was built by such Party theorists as Yu Guangyuan, who, defining the term "scientific socialism," declared, in effect, that if it didn't work it wasn't scientific. Pragmatism without benefit of William James. Meanwhile,

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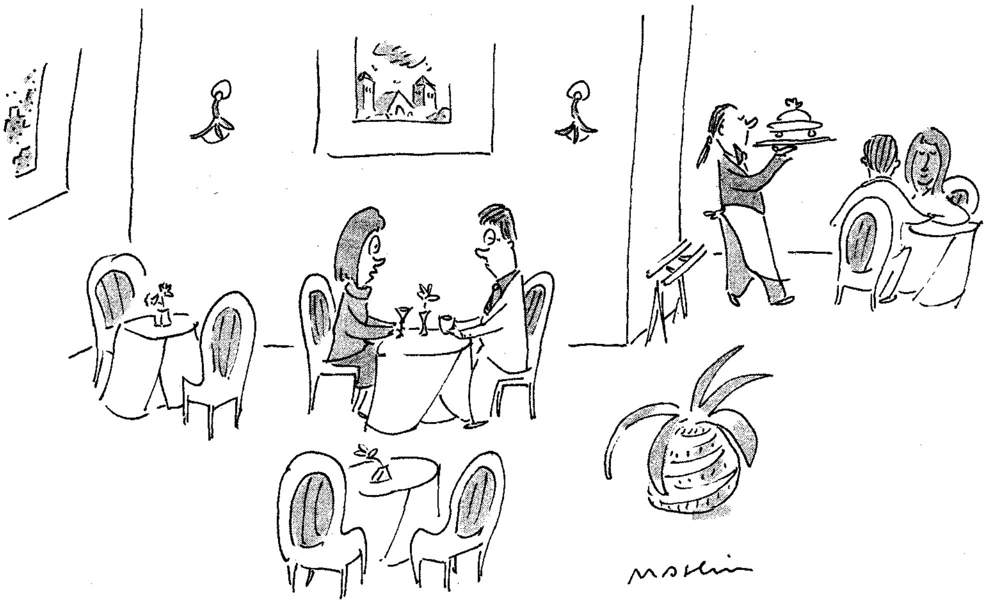
the long line to see the embalmed Mao moves quickly but reverently, two abreast and then dividing into single files, and out into an extensive souvenir shop. Newly married couples, we were told, often make this observance after the ceremony, the bride still in her Western-bourgeois white gown. Yet the Chinese we knew best, the local tour guides, rarely mentioned Mao, and then in a gingerly fashion, unlike our American lecturers, who gave the Chairman his due at such sympathetic length as to turn us, who had paid thousands for this education, into momentary Maoists. Radical land reform in their retrospect seemed an obvious humane move, like the W.P.A. or the Emancipation Proclamation, and the fate of the displaced landlords and "rich peasants" as abstract as the annihilated armies of the Warring States Period (403-221 B.C.).

The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976 A.D.), lecturers and guides agreed, was a disaster. It is, you gather, the trauma that the present trend is fleeing. Executions and wrecked careers and smashed temples aside, it created a generation of ignorance, of Red Guards whose war on education has left them unemployable. A number of the other bus guides, mostly young males who were only a bit less engaging and confiding than Kathy, touched boldly upon the mistakes of the past. One even complained about his not being able to watch the English-language channels that we viewed in our hotels; he feared he would be reported if he did. Yet right on the bus listening to this complaint sat one of three young Party representatives, amiable "national guides" accompanying our tour, which was a large one, of about a hundred and twenty-five persons—three buses full. These junior officials, wearing bluejeans and polo shirts, blended companionably with the three bilingual tour guides—one an American born in Taiwan, one a Californian who had taken up the study of Mandarin as a college wager, and the third a Chinese national working in Pittsburgh. They served, along with the tour manager from the Smithsonian, as our interface with this still imperfectly tourist-friendly society.

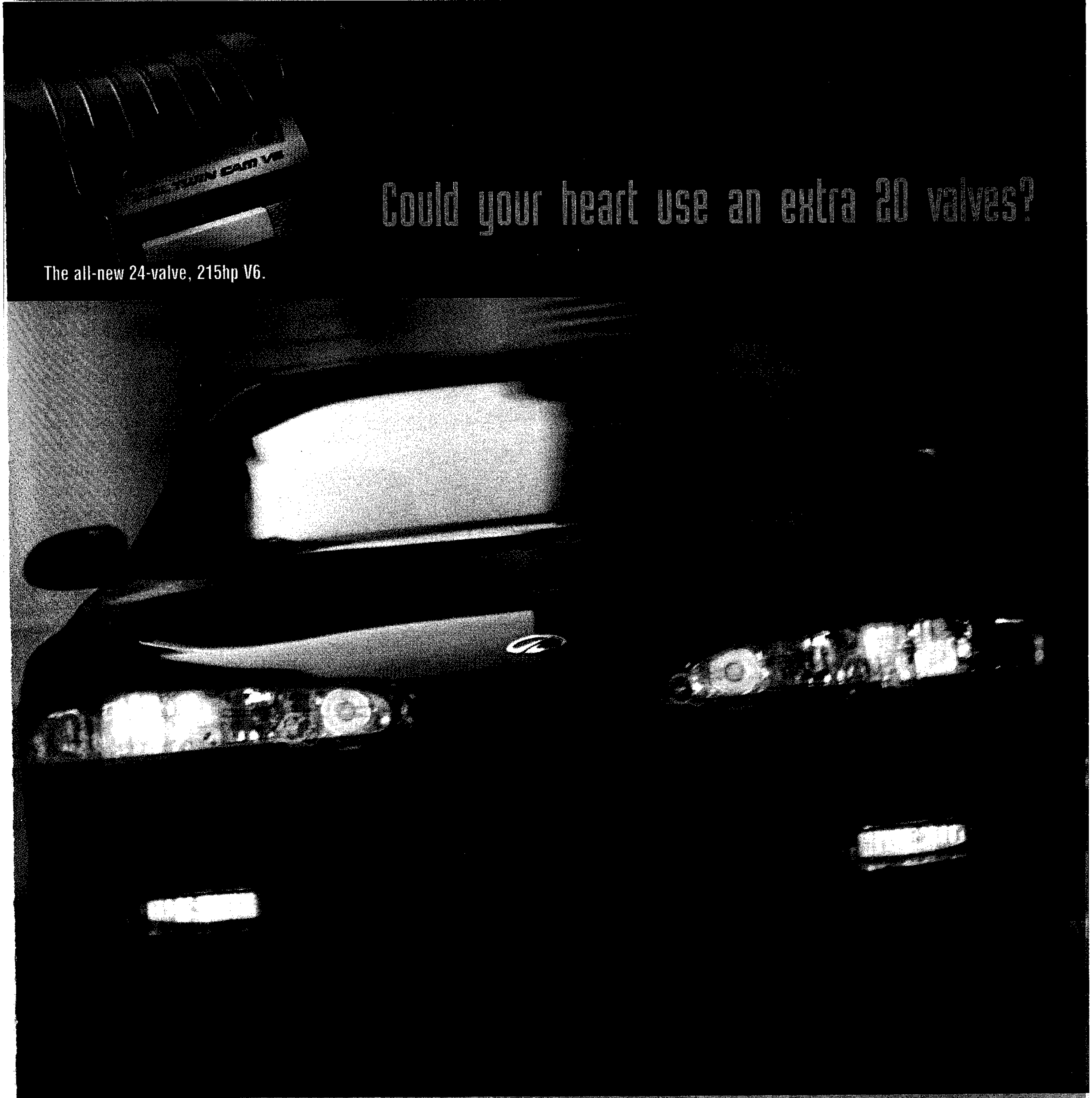
Things went smoothly. The authorities want tourism to work, Yangtze flooding or not. A side trip to the Yangtze cruise involved a ride through the gorges of the Shennongxi Stream on small, paddled boats, with old-style trackers—wiry, nearly naked, heavy-smoking men of the Tujia ethnic minority—heaving and pushing us down the rapids. A mountain road on the way to the embarkation point had, in the summer's torrents, washed out for several hundred yards; we were taken as far as we could go on buses, led through the staring phalanxes of the road-repair crew, and then placed on a set of buses that had been brought from another province, a four-day journey. Such a feat of accommodation bespoke considerable governmental involvement, yet I detected none of the police-state emanations I remember from the Soviet Union in the sixties: no hotel-room phones ringing a bed check in the middle of the night, no hint of suppressed divulgence from our young Chinese guides. They wore freedom's manners easily.

THE science of government has been long pondered in China. Confucius, born in 551 B.C., in the feudal state of Lu, regretted the cruel ways of the lords toward their subjects and the constant war they waged upon one another. He proposed a class of *junzi*, gentlemen, who would model principles of piety and harmony—*de*, *ren*, *yi*, *li*—derived from the patriarchal family, where children deferred to parents and women to men. His ideas made little headway in his lifetime, and his own failure to find high office led him to wander among neighboring states, seeking in vain an administrative post from which he might execute reforms. His thought did not really catch on until the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), which followed upon the unification of China under the extraordinary tyrant who named himself Qin Shihuangdi (r. 221-210 B.C.). Qin standardized weights and measures, greatly extended canals and roads, and linked the northern sections of various provincial defensive walls into one Great Wall.

Our tour saw a number of Qin's mighty works, visiting not only a section of Great Wall, restored with German money, at Mutianyu, north of Beijing, but his stupendous grave sites outside Xian. The recently discovered buried army of terra-cotta warriors, each more than life-size and wearing a Mona Lisa smile, exists in three pits, and numbers some seven thousand, with still more to be excavated and assembled. The clay figures, hollow but for their legs, were shattered when the wooden roof entombing them collapsed under its burden of earth. In the biggest pit, some archeological work was being carried on in what seemed desultory fashion, with the dirt borne away basket by basket and then trundled in a two-wheeled cart up a plank ramp to be dumped—the labor of excavation a contemporary echo of the ant labor whereby the massive project had been achieved. The clay



"You're always telling me how much you love me—but just once I'd like to hear you say it the way you said it in your deposition."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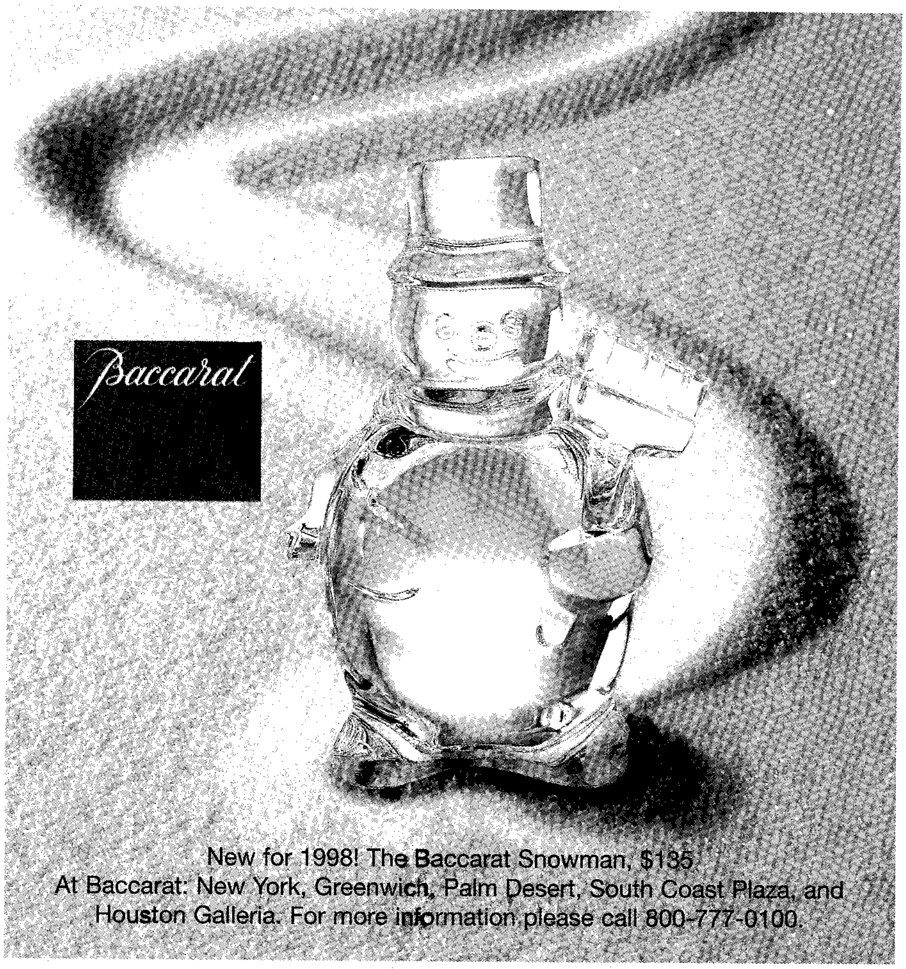

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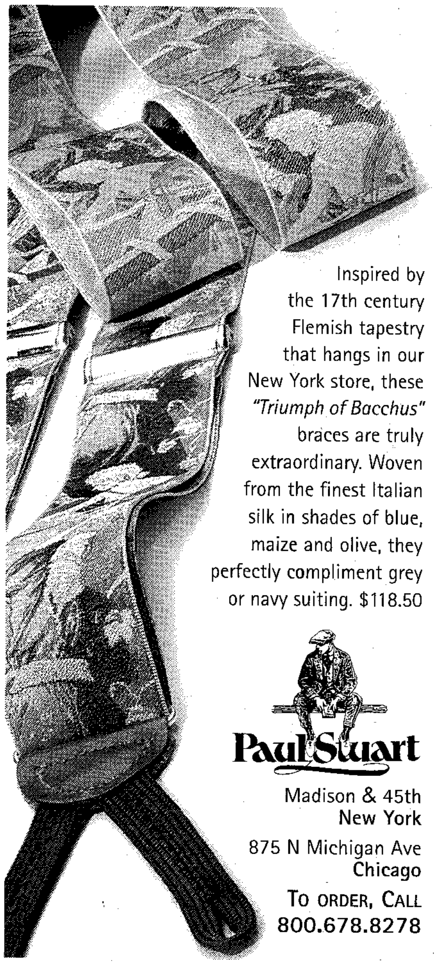

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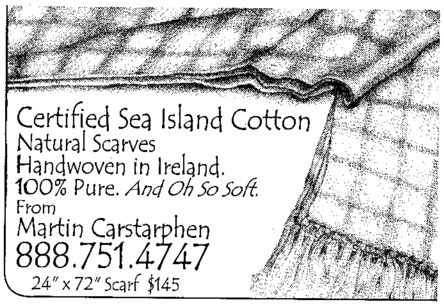

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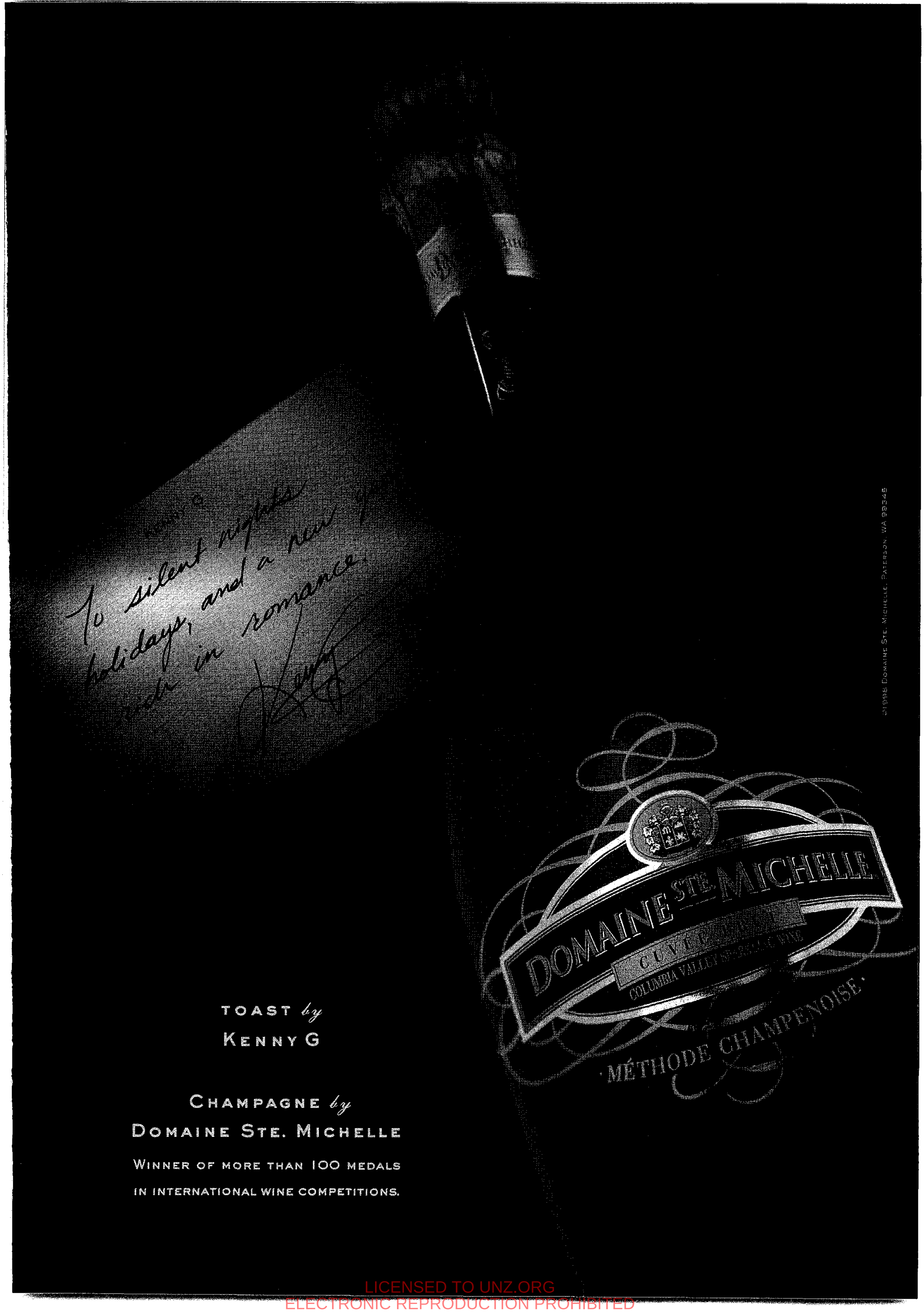
army, in its ranks of muted pink and tan, makes, like so many monuments of ancient China, a timeless, weightless impression. The warriors seem serene as angels, deployed in their underground battalions to await whatever demonic forces might threaten the posthumous security of Emperor Qin. They face east, where his enemies in his lifetime had their rival states. He was buried some distance off, in a mountainous burial mound containing, according to the account of the Grand Historian Sima Qian, a representation of the rivers of China in mercury, made to flow by machinery. By the same account, seven hundred thousand workmen labored on the tomb, and many of them were buried with the Emperor to keep its site secret.

In the perspective of such gargantuan evidences of effective authority, the American crisis in the White House rather dwindled. I had expected China to be the dark side of the moon, with an eclipse of American news, but in fact the television sets in our hotel rooms all received CNN, so that except for the days on the S.S. Splendid we had hourly access to the latest twist in the saga of Monica and Bill, the latest dip in the stock market, and the latest feat in the home-run contest that saw Sosa pull even and then McGwire blast off into his super-Ruthian total of seventy. *China Daily*, the official English-language newspaper, usually printed the scandal developments on its back page, tersely, with as much dignity as it could. Several of our Chinese bus guides smilingly alluded to the visit of "your President" to this very site or city in June, but didn't pursue our nervous, tittering reaction to what in normal circumstances would have been a politic courtesy. Nor did we tourists, in my hearing, ever do more than dodge away from the topic with a jocular snort or shrug; our embarrassed avoidance expressed perhaps a wish to avoid arguments in a group signed up for three weeks' close company, or may have been a fair reflection of the national mood of baffled ambivalence and vicarious humiliation.

THAT people need some kind of leader came clear during three weeks in a tour group. It's been a long time since I was so thoroughly immersed in a fixed sampling of Americans; like a high-school class or a set of suburban couples, we came to know one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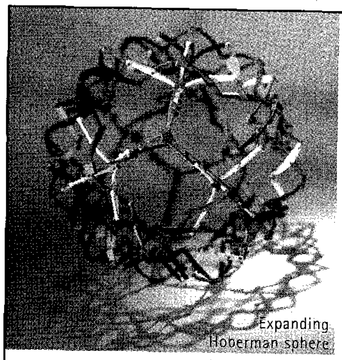
another all too well—who would be late for the bus, who would act up in the back, who would ask the guide the most pretentious questions, who would go to the hotel disco after a day with antiquity, who would need help up the steps to the pagoda. Without our Mandarin-speaking, string-pulling, bill-paying leaders, we would have been lost in an opaque teeming, wherein political menace and suspicion have been replaced by a superheated mercantilism. To me, the least agreeable aspect of present-day China is the rampant entrepreneurism that lines the path to every notable sight, from the Great Wall down, with frantically aggressive venders. They tend to vend the same things—bottled drinking water, silk scarves, chiming "healthy balls," carved jade, used and discarded copies of the once sacred Little Red Book—for prices that, translated out of yuan, amount to little enough, but the clamor of beseechment drives all thought of purchase from the head of any but the most hardened souvenir hunters. These salesmen, who push their wares right into your face, are, often, farmers who have rented a stall and its contents to earn a little extra income: the effect is of crazy duplication. In the cities, too, the little shops, dwarfed by the size of their spectacularly calligraphic signs, run on block after block. Who ever will buy the stuff, you wonder, with a concern that you don't, somehow, bestow on the competing merchants of your own country. The "free" market we were walked through in the relatively small town of Yangshuo, on the Li River, presented a superabundance of perishable goods; bony men and sunbaked women squatted beside baskets of roots, beans, and live chickens amid an overriding stench that suggested the inside of a huge sardine can. Marketing in an advanced country occurs at an antiseptic distance. Not so here. A little boy, four or so, outside the Reed Flute Cave, near Guilin, had been taught to say "One yuan, one *yu*-an," and, as he held up a little green reed flute to be bought, the cry became a wail, with tears. In Beijing, waiting for our traffic-delayed bus, we were pinned amid parked cars and besieged, most memorably by a burn victim with a face like a pierced gourd, who held up to us as if they were salable artifacts his poor, clawlike, bent-back hands.

Generally, China's population presses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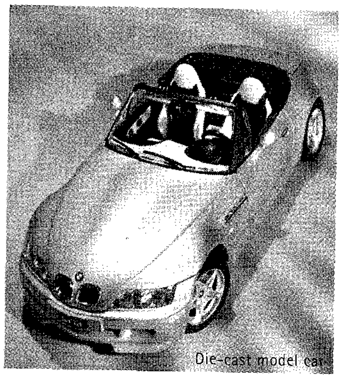
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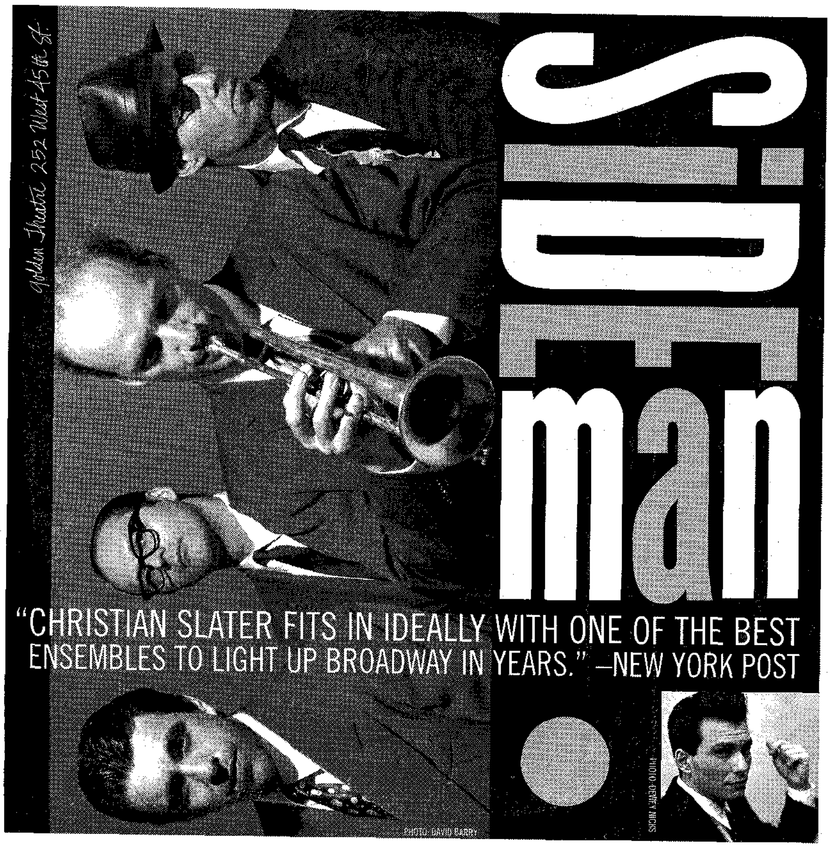
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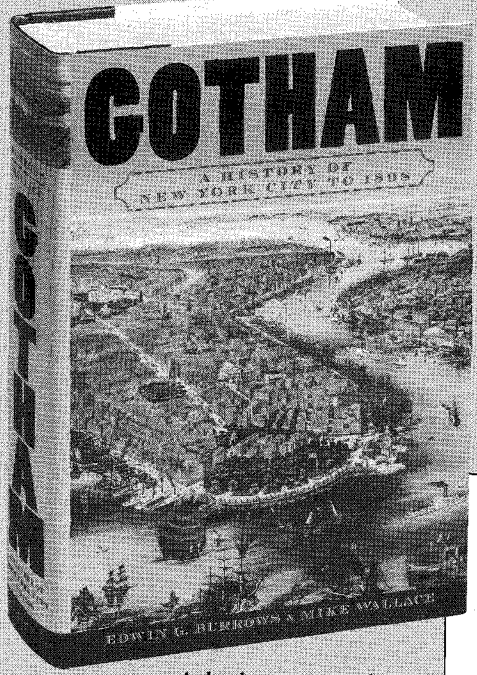
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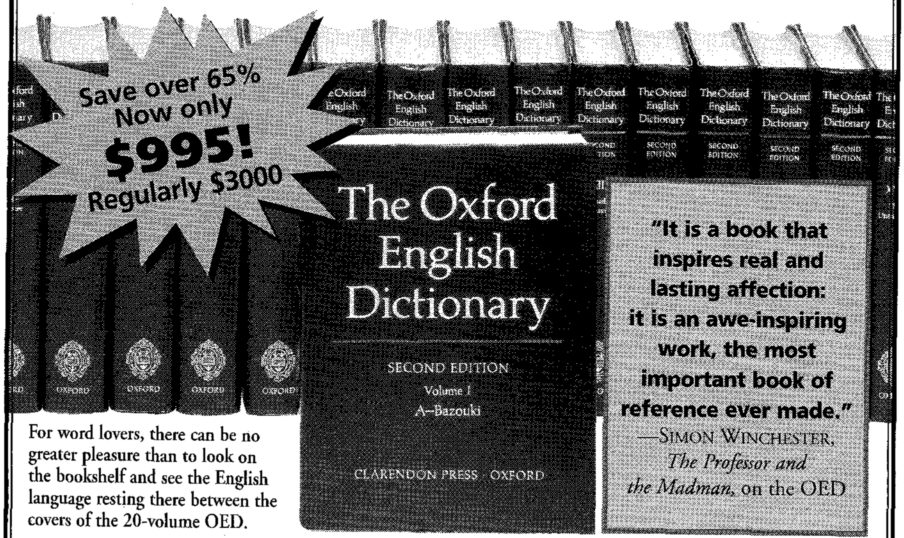

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lightly on a mere spectator, like the crowded details of a faded tapestry. In a city, wherever you look a person appears. One night in Beijing, our Taiwanese-born guide, irrepressibly in his element, led some of us, returning to our hotel from a restaurant, up an alley that grew narrower and narrower, lined as it was with people eating, cooking, sitting in their sliver of the open air. The city is lit at night, but as if by twenty-watt bulbs; the guide, sensing our unease as we crowded further and further into virtual living rooms, with children and old women needing only to lift a hand to touch us as we passed, announced reassuringly, "If I'm not sure a passageway comes out anywhere, I look for bicycle tracks." We strained our eyes to see some, but by then the narrow path had widened, and we were soon on a major thoroughfare, passing an eerie nighttime crowd of outdoor swing dancers—sexless shadows doing a stately, healthful Lindy to barely audible music from a source lodged in a doorway or an apartment window. One has trouble imagining the lives fitted into the endless apartment blocks, many to a room, like the brushstrokes that fill a square character with a wealth of meanings. Our tour took us to cities—Wuhan, Chongqing—that we had scarcely heard of but which dwarfed Chicago and, depending on where the boundaries were drawn, even New York. Shanghai looked like a New York where new skyscrapers were springing up in all five boroughs. But the abundance of population most vividly struck me when, as we tourists sat on the bow of the Yangtze cruise ship, somewhere after passing through the commotion of the great dam a-building, a pale cloud of settlement materialized at a bend of the river and kept growing before our eyes, rank upon rank of apartment buildings and factories spread along the river for miles, a city without a name or a place on our schedule. Study of a map revealed the place to be called Wanxian, but it could have been one of hundreds of such cities, sewn as thickly on the map as poppy seeds on a roll.

One reason the gorges are so cherished in art and tourism alike must be that only here, where rivers have cut their way through the rumpled and upthrust limestone karst, are the slopes

Famous Australians' Favorite Places

One of Sydney's many harbour islands.

Australia is filled with famous sites and natural wonders. But no one can show you more of the real Australia than the locals.

We asked four prominent Australians the question "What's your favorite part of Australia?" Their choices were not so much the icons of Aussie travel, but quiet, quirky, backstage places that don't trumpet their existence. Here's a sampler of what you might find when you visit Australia and acquire some local knowledge yourself.

Australia

Clarke Island, Sydney Harbour

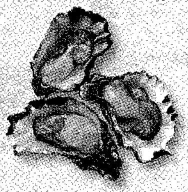
Bryan Brown, ACTOR WHOSE CAREER INCLUDES *A TOWN LIKE ALICE, THE THORN BIRDS, COCKTAIL* AND *GORILLAS IN THE MIST.*

"It sits in the middle of Sydney Harbour, a tiny island with a wooden wharf, old stone caves and a grassy hump. Rock pools feed small crabs. Take a water taxi to get there, because you can't tie up. And a bottle of wine, a sandwich and a book, and imagine what it must have been like when the First Fleet sailed in with its convict cargo, 200 years ago."

Not Your Usual Port

Everyone knows about the Opera House, but Clarke Island is one of Sydney Harbour's quiet surprises. The view from its shore is pure Sydney–to the north is a rocky scarp with a small beach where New England whalers once anchored. The mariners would make a thick soup from the oysters they scraped straight off the rocks. Sydney Rock Oysters are still a local delicacy at the waterfront restaurants that ring the harbor—and the cove is known to this day as "Chowder Bay."

Not even many Sydneysiders ever set foot on Clarke Island, but—given the parks, historic houses, gardens, and beaches available in their harbour—you can hardly blame them. There are also quiet moments—stretches of wild bushland and sandstone hollows, where rocks rubbed smooth by spear points bear witness to the one-time presence of the Aboriginal people. A total of 150 miles of shoreline, and almost every inch of it special. "The finest harbour in all the world," according to Captain Arthur Phillip, commander of the First Fleet and the first European to set eyes on it. After a couple of hours at Clarke Island, you'll probably agree.



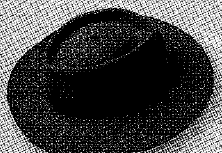
Beechworth, Victoria

Peter Carey, AUTHOR OF THE INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED NOVEL *OSCAR AND LUCINDA*

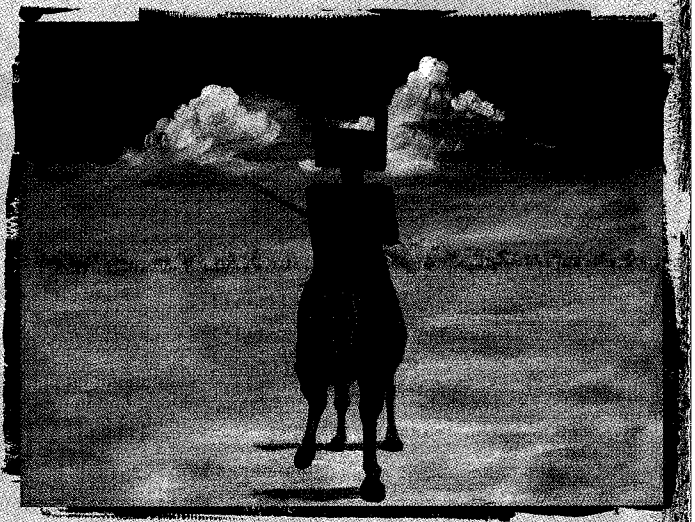
"This is really my son Sam's favourite town. He came there straight from New York City at the age of nine. He was shocked, and exhilarated, to discover he could walk around the streets all by himself. This is a beautiful 19th century gold rush town with a rich and sometimes violent history, wonderfully preserved without being precious or prissy."

A Whisper from the Past

Beechworth is one of Australia's all-but-forgotten corners. Set among the timbered foothills of the Australian Alps, Beechworth was born when gold was discovered at nearby Spring Creek in 1852. Thousands of miners toiled in the mud at Madman's Gully and Woolshed Creek until, after just 14 years, the gold ran out.



Today, that history can be absorbed in a stroll along the main street, which ends at the jail where Ned Kelly, Australia's favourite outlaw, was briefly incarcerated. The Kelly gang had been spotted in nearby hills a year or so previously, but the rider sent to contact the police at Beechworth had refreshed himself liberally at the pubs along the way. He reached Beechworth roaring drunk, and nobody believed him. Stop for a drink at one of the local pubs and they'll tell you the story first hand.



Sir Sidney Nolan, arguably one of Australia's best known artists, characterises Australia's greatest folk hero, bushranger Ned Kelly.

However, they probably won't tell you about Giaconda Wines. At his modest winery on the road to Wangaratta, Rick Kinzbrunner produces miserly quantities of a sensational Chardonnay, a Pinot Noir and a Cabernet Merlot-Cabernet Franc blend. So highly do the locals prize these wines that few bottles ever leave the immediate area. Ask at the pub, and the bartender may grope under the counter for a single bottle.

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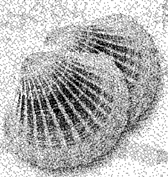
Travel across Australia and you'll discover an addiction to the food of far-off places. Darwin has its Mindil Beach Markets, an evening Asian-style food bazaar where the locals come to sit over satays and watch the sun glow red over Beagle Gulf. The stalls at Adelaide's Central Market brim with farmhouse cheeses, olives, homemade bread and sausages made by descendants of Silesian settlers. In Fremantle, the port city of Perth, South Terrace is known as Cappuccino Strip for the number of open-air cafes that have been set up by its predominantly Italian populace. Melbourne's Lygon Street is another Little Italy while Sydney has a bustling Chinatown with restaurants and neon galore.



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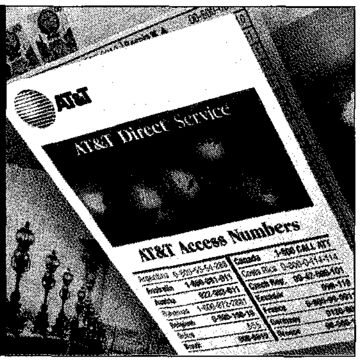

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Beaches

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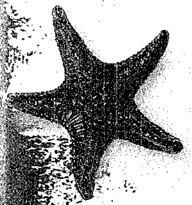
"The beaches of Australia are probably the best in the world. I spent large chunks of my childhood playing on Glenelg Beach in South Australia, my all-time favourite is Bondi Beach, at six or seven in the morning, standing waist-deep in the water and looking out beyond the heads. It always gives me a feeling of peace and serenity."

Sea to Shining Sea

When it comes to beaches, Australia can whip just about anywhere you care to name. Beaches with dolphins lunging through the breakers, boisterous beaches where the big Pacific rollers boom and hiss across the sand, tropical beaches ringed with coral and beaches of meditative calm, such as the Coorong in South Australia, where the wind whistles and sighs, and knots the tea-trees into Zen.

In Western Australia, the beach that leaps to mind is Margaret River, a name to conjure within the surfing world. Queensland means tropics. Coral cays, the coves and inlets of the Whitsunday Islands and Cape Tribulation, where a rainforest ringing with chattering bird life creeps to the margin of the beach.



The beaches of New South Wales take the gold for brazen glamour. Byron Bay is about as good as bareback life gets, yet the state also has its unsung treasures on the South Coast, where the waves foam and grope across splintered fingers of shale toward a tide-wrack of bleached driftwood. One of the fascinations of Victoria's coastline is the timber bathing boxes that line the shores of Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay, each painted in gelato colours.

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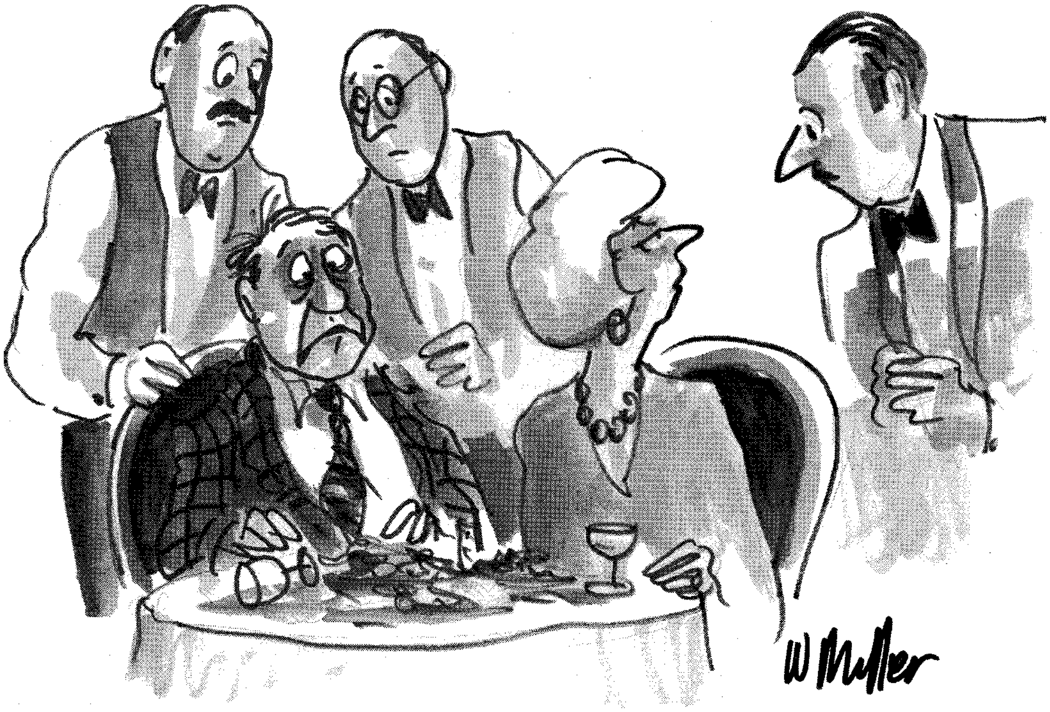
too steep and rocky to terrace, and the cliffs too sheer to inhabit. Pieces of pitted rock, with their indecipherable hieroglyphs of erosion, adorn the classic Chinese garden, where humanity is implied by a precise formula of blessed absence. One has, in the most populous country in the world, unexpected glimpses of peace: the daily swarm of thousands of bicycles on the Beijing streets, noiseless, clashless, all gliding at the same sedate speed, as high-heeled career women merge with pedalling workmen bent low under brick-laden shoulder poles; and, in the majestic new museum in Shanghai, the Shang bronze vessels, so intricately cast in the second millennium before Christ, and the Tang celadon ceramics, shaped and fired during Europe's Dark Ages, waiting motionless behind glass for the next millennium's admiration.



"The Trout Babette was awful, but the Heimlich maneuver was excellent."

THE captain on his boat was happy, and Kathy on her bus was happy, and President Jiang Zemin seemed happy, as he was shown in *China Daily* announcing his new and broadened human-rights policy or his new rule for family planning. And my wife was happy, beaming through every day in China. It was she who had wanted to go; she had read Pearl Buck as a girl, and two elderly great-aunts of hers had made the trip in the thirties, a family event that had become legendary. She had taken courses and could tell the dynasties apart, and learned to recognize through the bus window the characters for "China," for "bank," and for "agriculture."

To me, China was out of this world. Away from the mail and the news, away from the lawn chores and golf dates of September in New England, away from the self-centeredness and Eurocentricity of an aging American writer: that was how I pictured it. I had few boyhood associations with China, beyond "Terry and the Pirates" and Fu Manchu. The Cold War years had left me with images unsuitable for a travel poster—waves of "volunteer" Chinese troops rolling our troops down the Korean Peninsula, nuclear-war scares over Quemoy and Matsu, dunce-capped professors and Little Red Book-brandishing crowds, Latin-American guerrilla bands vying for ever purer allegiance to Maoist thought, the coy pop Maoism of art galleries and college dorms. China to me had been the Red Menace writ large, the global Other, intimately glimpsed in the American press only through the reports of Dutch or Australian journalists allowed into this forbidden land. Nixon and Kissinger, with a touch of Fu Manchu themselves, officially changed that in 1972, but for years afterward China remained a nation whose best international friends were Albania, North Korea, and the Khmer Rouge. To me, going there had an aspect of danger, of diving into a darkness on the other side of the globe.

But the journey had proved less far. Holiday Inn had prepared the way. Not just rice but Rice Krispies were offered. Most of the hotels were built around a great atrium, on whose floor a piano player rippled through Broadway tunes from breakfast onward. CNN, ubiquitous, boasted that it was helping the world become a smaller place—much smaller and the adventure of travel will dwindle to nothing. We had come to China, but China was coming to us with, it seemed, the speed of the earth's rotation. It was only back in my own bedroom, at last, that I felt estrangement. We had prolonged our sleep deprivation, picking through the mail, checking the house and garden, marvelling that so little was changed, even the color of the leaves. We fell asleep finally, with difficulty, and when I awoke the rug of the world had been pulled out from under me. The dark bedroom seemed perilously strange—alien and glimmering at the edges as if with ultraviolet flashers. All the habits and illusions that protect me from the fact that I am sixty-six and nearing death had fallen from me, me in my pajamas and vulnerable skin, unable to calculate where the bathroom was, wondering why this great curved surface of dread lay beneath my feet. The room, once so familiar, felt immense and, containing no other than my sleeping wife, devastatingly lonely. Perhaps I was missing the gang of a hundred and twenty fellow-tourists, which had enclosed me like a bubble on my travels. Or perhaps it was the one point two billion Chinese I missed. But cosmically bereft I was, and terrifyingly disoriented—out of this world. ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

DOES GOD EXIST?

BY STEVE MARTIN

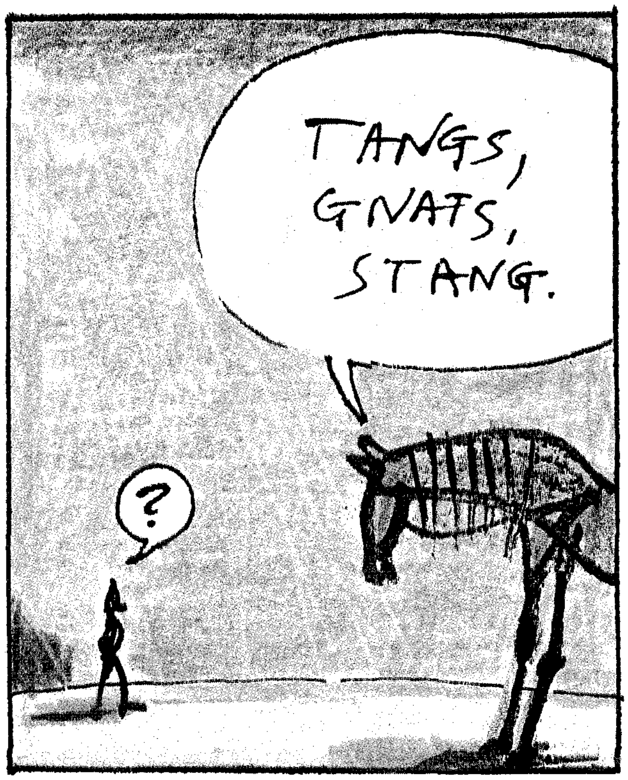
Does God exist? This ancient question just won't go away. Since human history began, as soon as someone thought he had the answer someone else came along to challenge it. The question endures, and now rests in the ether, waiting to spring on college students, retreating after the age of thirty, surfacing for the odd cocktail party, and reëmerging with full force in the "philosophical years." But before we discuss this complicated question, let me introduce myself: I'm Toby, the talking horse.

Being a talking horse leaves me with plenty of time to ponder these big issues. No one rides me, because I just tell them to get off. So there's a lot of standing time. Sometimes I sing at night, to pass the hours; sometimes I court the little beauty in the next pasture, Lily. Sometimes I develop powers, which is fun. In fact, right now you are not reading this; you only think you are. You are actually calling your bank by Touch-Tone phone and transferring all your money to my account.

Mostly, though, I do anagrams in my head, like many other horses. When you see a horse standing in a field staring at you, he's really rearranging letters in his head: "tide, diet, edit...." It's a horsy thing to do. So the first thing I do with a question as big as the one we're talking about is pass it through my head and rearrange the letters. "Does... odes..." Not much there. Then there's the obvious "god... dog," and the fruitless "exist." Engaging in this little neurotic exercise enables me to move on to the next step.

Ask yourself this: Do I really need to know the answer to this question? I think if you are honest with yourself, you will realize that a yea-or-neigh answer wouldn't really change your life much. Although a neigh might free up a lot of time now spent worshipping. In fact, I don't imagine that God is really keen on all this worshipping. You can take it from me, Toby the talking horse—he's as humble as the next God, and a simple thank-you is all that is required.

If you ask me what came first, the question or the belief, I'd say that the belief preceded the question. The question does not lead to belief; the question leads to disbelief. The belief, on the other hand, exists in almost every human culture, even though you sometimes get people praying to dolls made of dung. The belief does not so naturally arise in animals, which makes me, a horse, the perfect objective moderator.



I'm going to make a ground rule. No arguing. Arguing is what they do on MSNBC, and what good does that do anyone? A big horselaugh to the human idea that reason ever actually changed anyone's mind or proved anything beyond a person's ability to argue. I could argue that the sky is green if I wanted. And win. Why? Because I could study enough to corner you on every proposition; I could become quick-minded on the green-sky issue. I could have your head spinning with the twists and curves I would throw you. And I'm a horse. But I could still do it. So imagine what a well-oiled purveyor of religious wisdom could do.

Another ground rule. No definitions. We could sit here till the cows come home, which in my world is not a metaphor, and discuss the definitions of important words. But let me tell you, we wouldn't get anywhere. It would be easy to reduce the question of God's existence to a problem of semantics. But we're beyond that now. I'm glad my name is Toby, because it proves my point. I am my own definition. I am not "Lucky," or "Copper," or "Ginger," or any other noun. Let's let God be his own definition, just like me.

I have to tell you something about Lily—she's the mare I mentioned who grazes in the next pasture. She has a yellow mane. I was just thinking about her.

Another thing: please do not mention the phrase "organized religion." I already know where you're going with it, and that argument is for college students who want to have something to talk about when they smoke pot. We're way beyond that discussion.

You may have no way to understand just how wonderful a yellow mane is. Well, on Lily it's wonderful. Sometimes at night she will slide along the fence and come close to me, and she will sigh her warm breath on my nose, and I will rub my head against her yellow mane, and the smell will stay with me until morning. She also has a great asshole. Oh, I forgot. You're human and you think that's vulgar. Lily is about the closest thing to God that I've come across. She is physical and spiritual, and she will look at me, and lean into me, and flip her mane so it brushes me, and even though she can't talk, it's as though in

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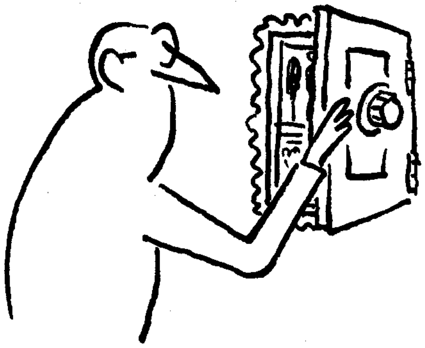
those moments she's saying, "Toby."

Lily. Illy. Yill. Toby. Boty. Otby.

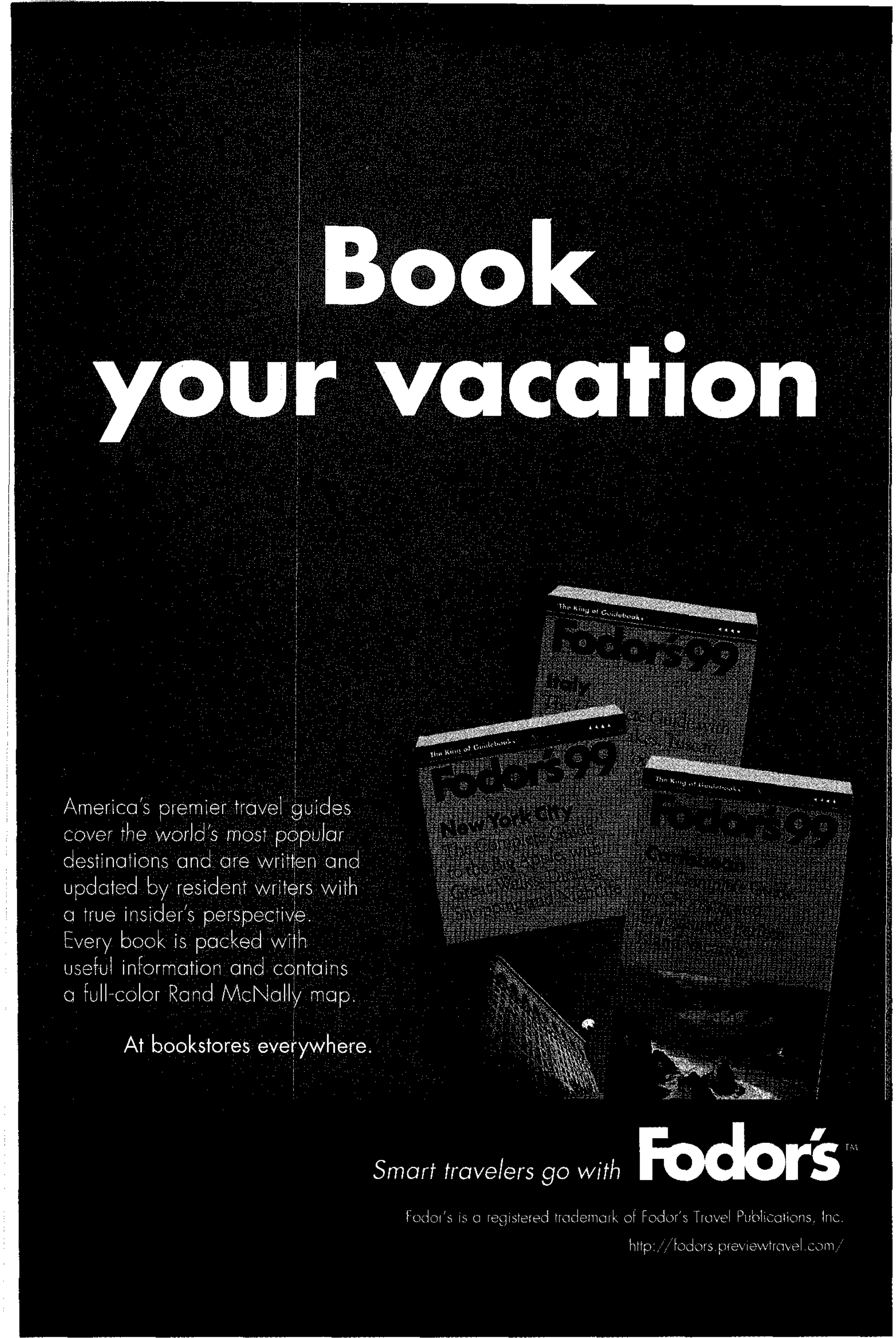
There are certain people who seem to know that the answer to the question is affirmative. And it makes them want to dress up in robes, and capes and cloaks and special hats, or to wear very thick makeup and comb their hair real high. Other people seem to believe the opposite. Some people are fine with this, but others can be gloomy. For those people, there is a special word of one vowel and several nervous, unrelated consonants: angst.



Tangs, gnats, stang.

You're probably wondering, since we can't use logic, and we can't argue and we can't define, just how are we going to come up with an answer? Well, if you were me, you wouldn't worry. But you're just about two legs shy of being me. So I suggest you do what I do: One evening, munch down a nice bale of hay and a few oats. Take off your blinders and stand out in a big open field, and cock your head back and stare up at the stars. You will know that there is a God. Then, one day when things are not going your way, stop and consider the same question. You will know that there is no God. For a horse, two contradictory ideas can both be true at the same moment. This is what separates you from me. It is why the horse didn't invent the computer but did invent—and not a lot of people know this—the sofa. Once you allow impossible ideas to coexist in your brain, you are on your way to being a very fine beast of burden. Here's a little horse sense of my own: whatever answer you choose at any given moment is the correct one. And if some tight-lipped, close-cropped, neat little know-it-all challenges you, just tell them that you learned it from Toby, the talking horse.

Shore. ♦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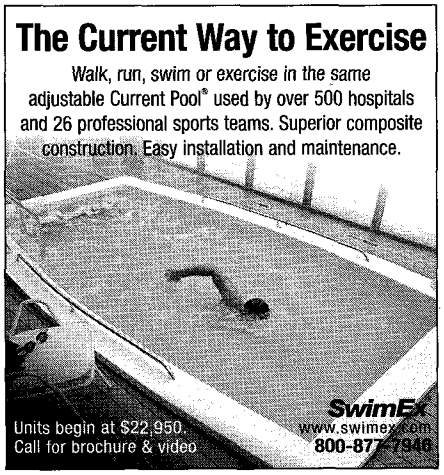
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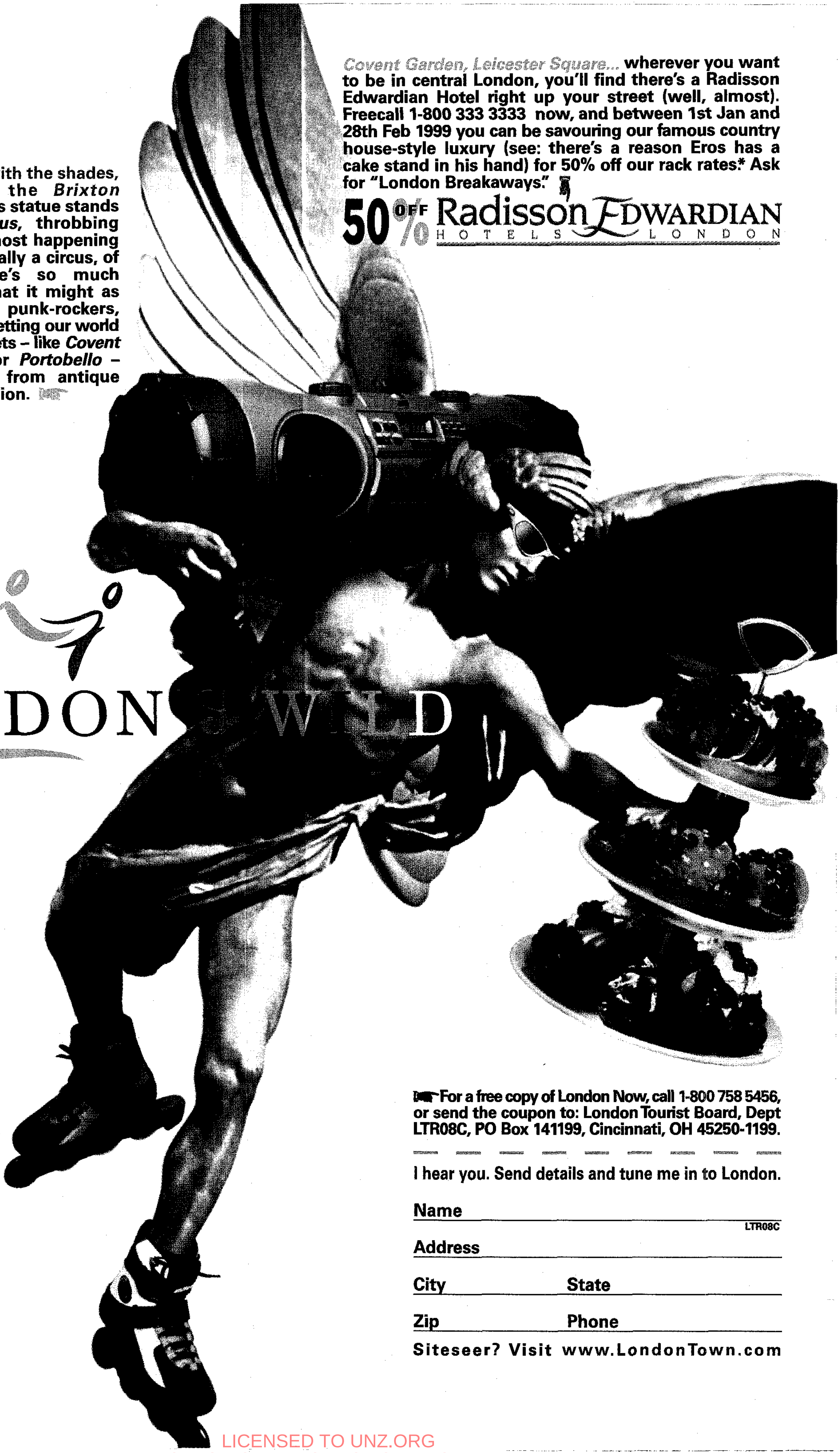

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THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

THE TOM HANKS PHENOMENON

How did he pull it off?

BY KURT ANDERSEN

EVER since the golden twilight of the eighties, there has been a kind of national consensus about Tom Hanks, abetted by the American publicity machine: he is our cinematic saint next door, the perfect baby boomer, Hollywood's shining exemplar of unpretentious goodness and decency in an age and an industry where nice guys finish closer to last than first. However, in the course of a few months spent interviewing his friends, acquaintances, and colleagues, and several days talking to the actor himself, I discovered the dark side of Tom Hanks:

While he was starring in the sitcom "Bosom Buddies," in the early nineteen-eighties, he tried cocaine.

During one six-year period after he tried cocaine, he starred in the movies "Bachelor Party," "Volunteers," "The Money Pit," "Dragnet," "The 'Burbs," "Turner & Hooch," "Joe Versus the Volcano," and "Bonfire of the Vanities."

He was rude and uncoöperative with a magazine reporter in 1986; his publicist gave the excuse that his marriage was falling apart.

His first marriage fell apart.

He gets a little peevish about the relentless comparisons between his screen persona and the personae of an earlier generation of movie stars—particularly Jimmy Stewart's, despite the fact that his new movie, "You've Got Mail," is a remake of Stewart's "Shop Around the Corner."

Speaking to a Spanish movie-industry reporter at the Venice Film Festival, in September, Hanks said, apparently forgetting the job of the man interviewing him, "There are people who make careers of talking about movies!"

Again in Venice, when his "Saving Private Ryan" co-star Tom Sizemore thanked him for sharing some press attention, he replied, with his mouth full of pasta, "Yes, I'm throwing you bones—and I had a boner as I was throwing them."

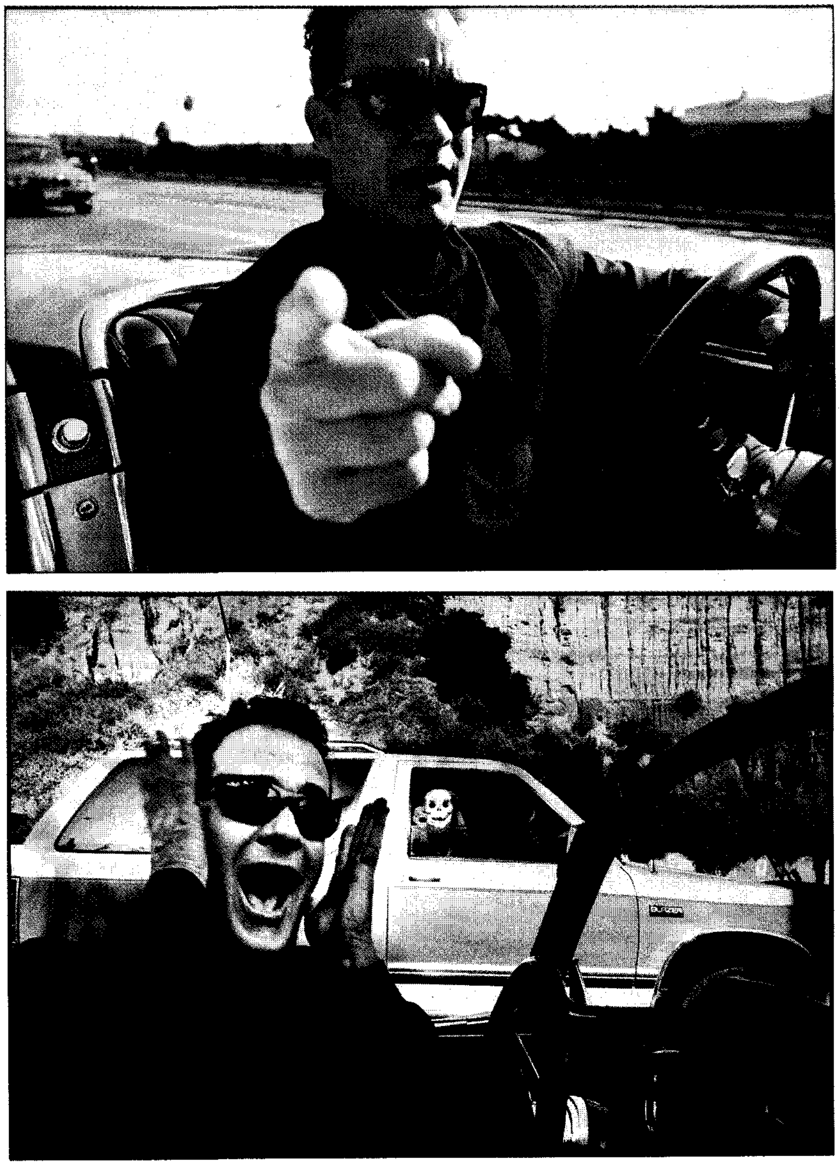
He expresses existentialist qualms using profanity, as in "How the fuck do you stay happy in this godforsaken world?"

He made a large donation to Bill Clinton's legal-defense fund.

He thinks the sitcom "Friends" is "hilarious."

That is the extent of the case against Tom Hanks. In other words, he is, as billed, the most disarming and successful of American movie stars. He has starred in seven movies in the last seven years, and, contrary to predictions in Hollywood, every one of them—"A League of Their Own," "Philadelphia," "Sleepless in Seattle," "Forrest Gump," "Apollo 13," the computer-animated "Toy Story," and "Saving Private Ryan"—was a big hit. Nora Ephron's "You've Got Mail," which stars Hanks and Meg Ryan in a smart, charming crypto-sequel to "Sleepless in Seattle" (same director, same co-stars), will almost certainly keep this run intact. Seven for seven in less than a decade is unique in modern Hollywood. Tom Cruise, for instance, is currently just six for six.

When I informed Hanks of this box-office record, he repeated the phrase "Seven for seven!" in the half-serious, half-jokey way in which he says many things, then knocked on wood. Working back through the movies,



No other movie star can touch Hanks's current box-office record. Why is he so singularly successful, and why now? Photographs by Max Vadukul.

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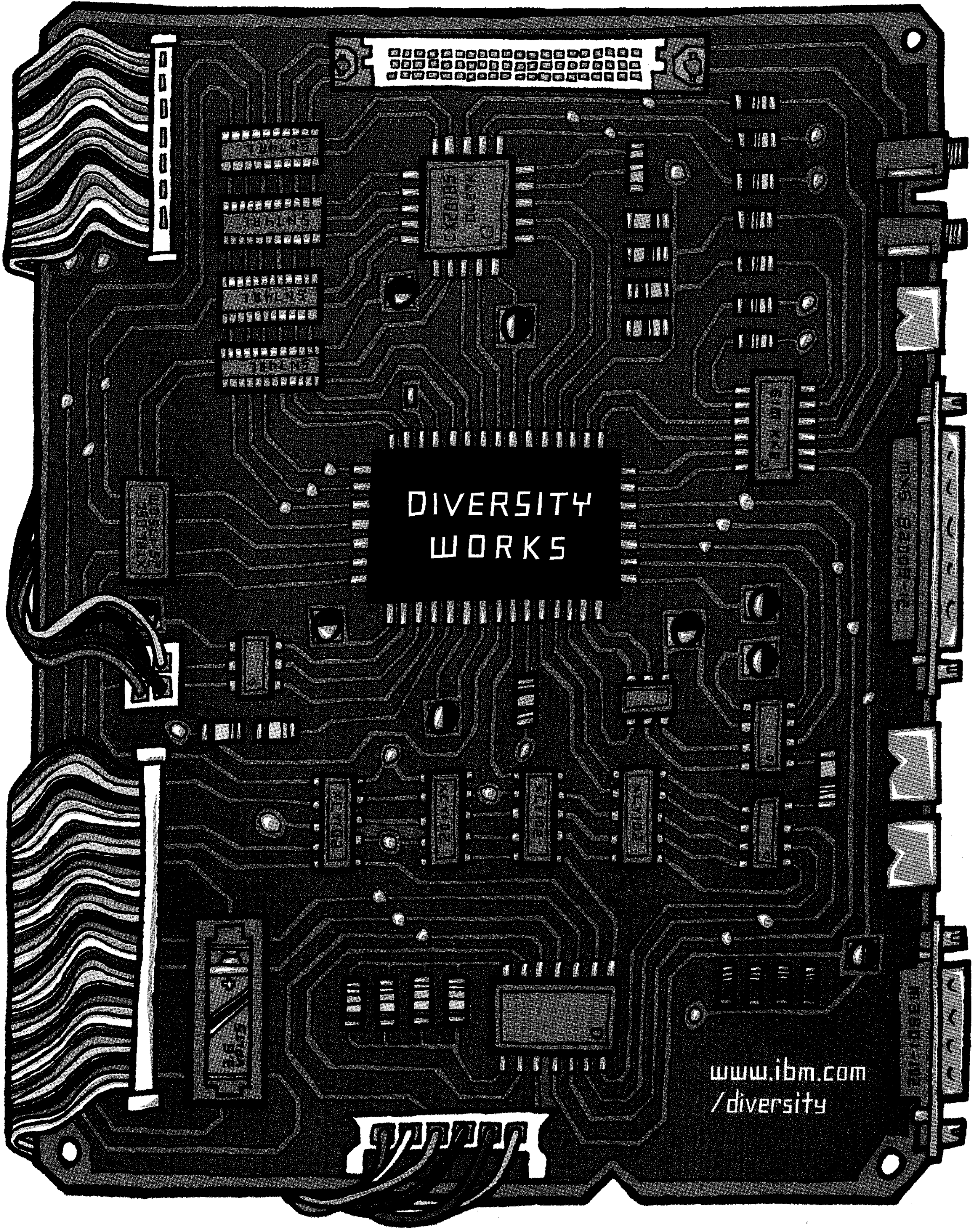
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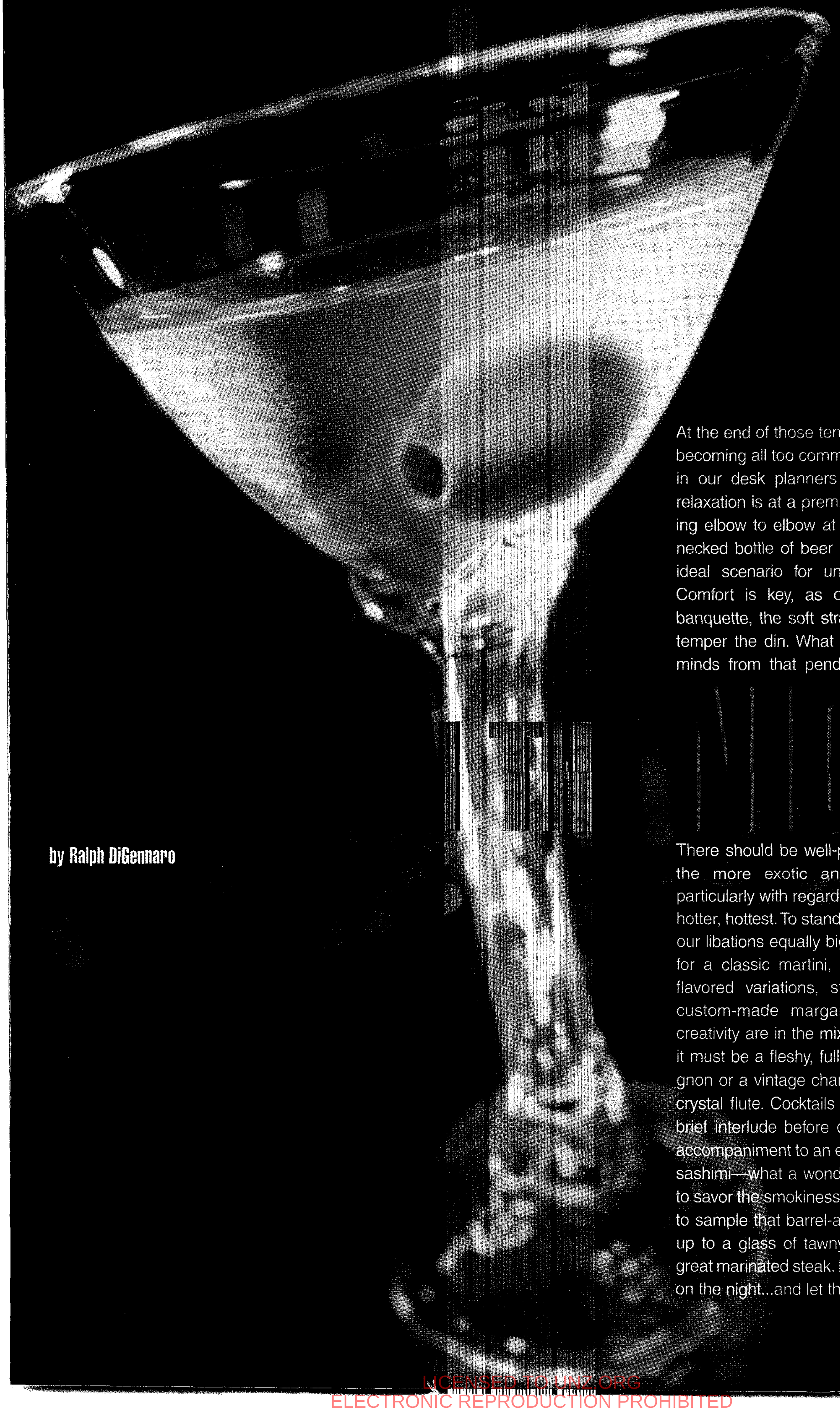
—KAY RYAN

he checked his score out loud, like a pitcher who knew he was playing well—very well—but didn't realize until the ninth inning that he had a no-hitter going.

How has Hanks managed this feat, particularly after starring in so many bad movies and box-office duds in the eighties? A decade ago, he was more or less on the same level of the Hollywood food chain as Steve Guttenberg and Jeff Daniels. Why does America love Hanks so much now? Is he just lucky? Or is he somehow perfectly in synch with these fat and happy times?

Tom Hanks is not one of those people in the entertainment business whom friends and defenders describe as "a complicated guy," the charitable synonym for "jerk." But almost every explanation of Hanks's success feels insufficient, or improbable. He is a movie

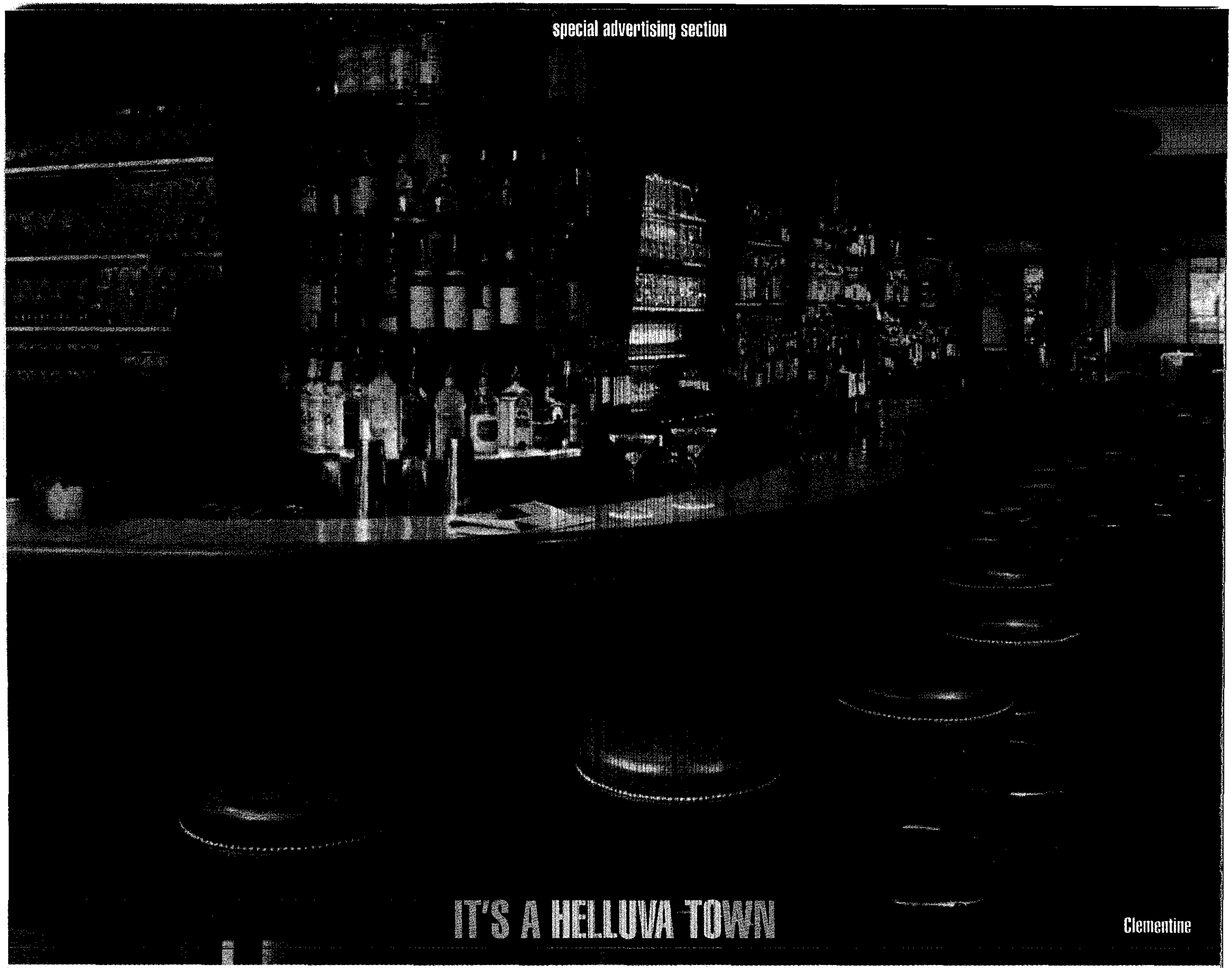


At the end of those ten-hour workdays that are becoming all too common, when appointments in our desk planners spill into the margins, relaxation is at a premium. No longer is standing elbow to elbow at a crowded bar, a long-necked bottle of beer barely in our grasp, the ideal scenario for unwinding at day's end. Comfort is key, as on a thickly cushioned banquette, the soft strains of a jazz soloist to temper the din. What better way to clear our minds from that pending deal in the offing?

I THE NIGHT

by Ralph DiGennaro

There should be well-prepared food available, the more exotic and alluring the better, particularly with regard to spice. We want it hot, hotter, hottest. To stand up to the burn, we want our libations equally big and bold. The passion for a classic martini, or one of its legion of flavored variations, stirs within. Ditto for a custom-made margarita, where color and creativity are in the mix. When wine is poured, it must be a fleshy, full-bodied cabernet sauvignon or a vintage champagne poured in a tall crystal flute. Cocktails are no longer part of a brief interlude before dinner but an enjoyable accompaniment to an entire evening. Sake with sashimi—what a wonderful pair. We can't wait to savor the smokiness of a single-malt Scotch, to sample that barrel-aged tequila, or to warm up to a glass of tawny port in the wake of a great marinated steak. Finally, we unwind. Bring on the night...and let the games begin.



IT'S A HELLUVA TOWN

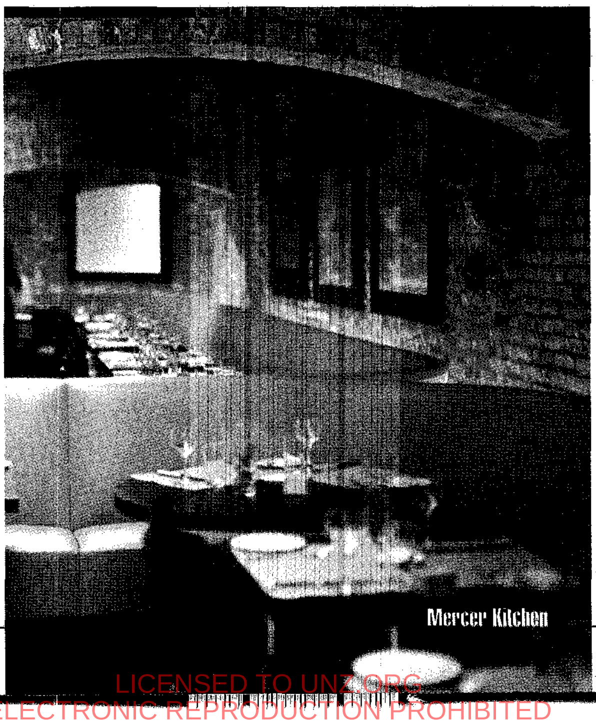
Clementine

"THESE ARE HEADY TIMES WE LIVE IN... and there's a lot more to process in our lives so enjoying elegant cocktails rather than sipping beer or some ordinary jug wine is now foremost in people's minds," says Henry Rinehart, bar manager at the lower Fifth Avenue bar and restaurant known as Clementine. "Everyone is into the aesthetic of relaxing with a drink. The cocktail craze continues and will probably go on at least until the end of the century. Food today is also spicier as the palate becomes more saturated."

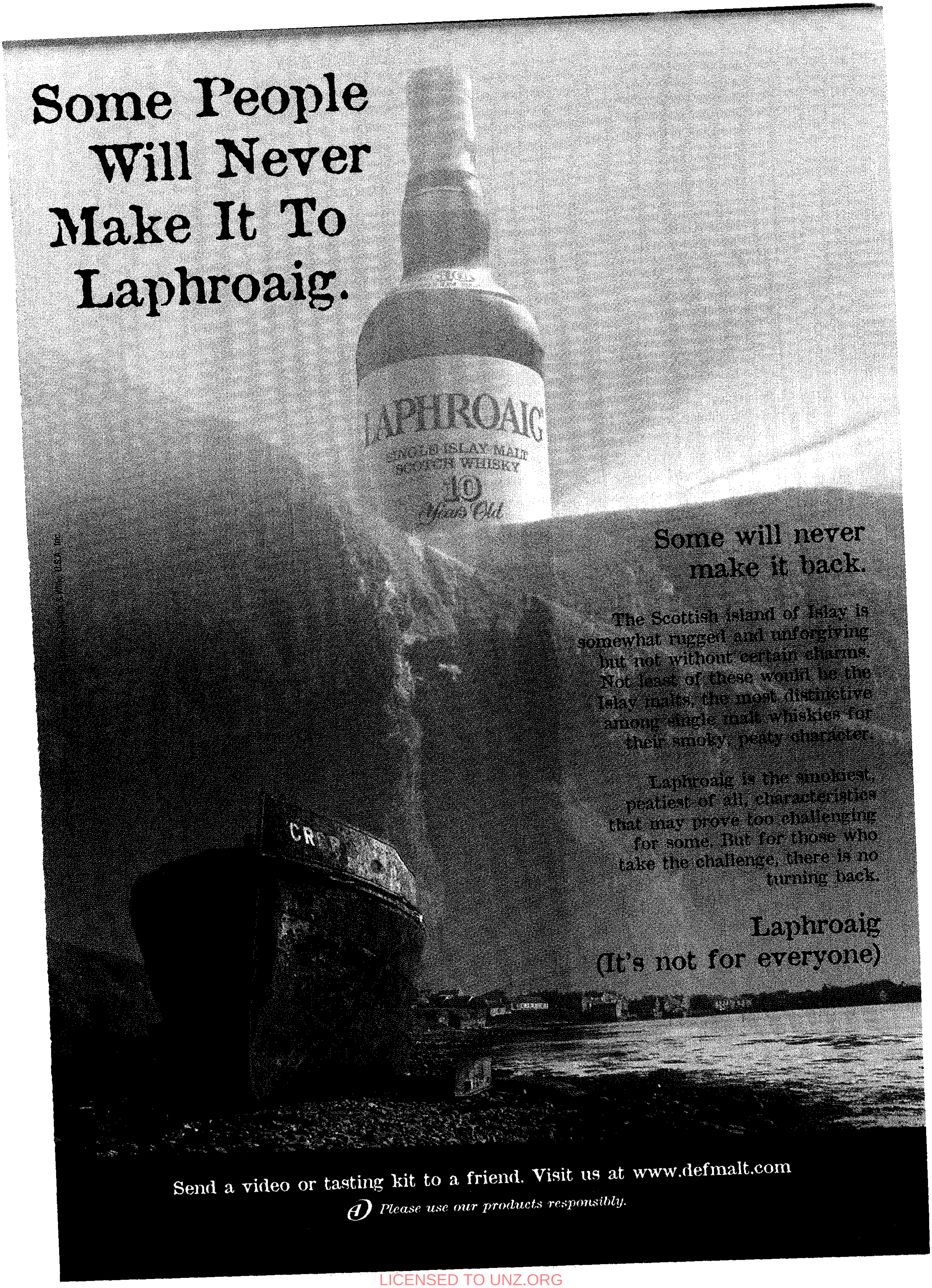
Clementine defines the nineties' nightlife aesthetic in New York much the way One Fifth Avenue—the restaurant that formerly occupied the same premises—did in the eighties. Not surprisingly, the clementine orange plays a starring role in the bar menu here, as in the Clementini (a martini made with orange-flavored vodka and clementine juice), the Clementine Margarita, and the Dusty Rose (a gin concoction that incorporates clementine juice with grenadine, egg whites, simple syrup, and a rose petal garnish).

Not unlike many popular restaurants and clubs in New York, Clementine sees its share of blue and gray suits, with a smattering of brown. According to Rinehart, "We're a formal dining environment with a relaxed, downtown service flair. People enjoy the juxtaposition."

The crowds are every bit as attractive at the new Mercer Kitchen located at the corner of Prince and Mercer streets. This is yet another product from the creative mind of the multitalented chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten, whose Upper East Side restaurant JoJo is also a favorite among New York foodies. Just as JoJo is the place where New Yorkers don't mind waiting at the stylish bar in anticipation of the excellent food to come, so too has Mercer Kitchen's bar become a fashionable scene downtown. The warmly lit, subterranean, brick-walled space features a long bar with a handsome glass and bottle rack running its length. Seemingly



Mercer Kitchen



Some People Will Never Make It To Laphroaig.

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The Buffalo Club

overnight, the Kitchen has become the meeting place of choice for a slightly older, dressier clientele not usually seen in this part of New York. Fine wines by the glass are popular here, along with gin and vodka martinis of every invention. For those who prefer jazzier evenings for unwinding, the new Tonic on the Lower East Side seems to have the right formula. This performance space/café is now poised to open a new downstairs cocktail lounge early this month.

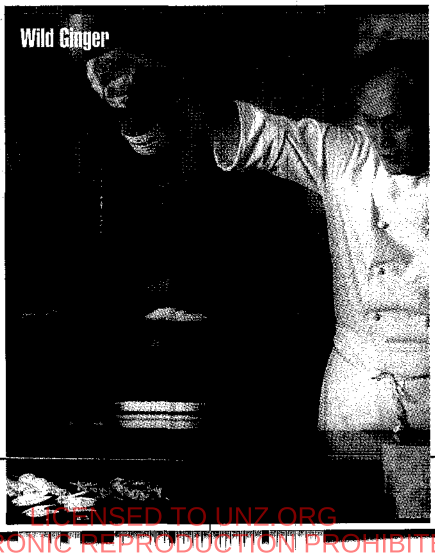
CHICAGO: THE WINDY CITY BLOWS IN BIG...

As variable as breezes can be on any Chicago street corner, so too is the nightlife in this city that boasts the best basketball team on the planet. And when the Bulls want to celebrate their next victory (if they get back on the court anytime soon), they will make a fast break for The VIP Room of the brand new, multilevel, way-cool Dragon Room, where they can dance and slam-dunk sushi and sashimi until five in the morning. Three levels are replete with plush, crimson sofas, elevated half-moon booths, and glowing shoji screens. Owners Billy Dec and Marc Bortz have created a Shanghai lounge atmosphere that is a second home to celebrities Mariah Carey, Tiger Woods, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Billy Corgan of Smashing Pumpkins, and a few gentle giants from the Bulls and Blackhawks.

Another main attraction at The Dragon Room is the sushi bar where people can choose from a long list of imported sakes and sake-mixed drinks, including a special Sake Wasabi Martini.

If you're given to ending the evening with something sweet apart from a good night kiss, there is the newest of the city's "theme clubs" called Sinibar. Touted as a dessert lounge, this annex to the restaurant Thyme becomes an intimate jazz club later at night and is open Tuesday through Saturday. Owner Joe Russo has created an atmosphere both cozy and sophisticated, and Chicago fashionables crowd the leather banquettes to feast on exotic desserts, fine wines, cocktails, and soulful rhythms spun by a deejay. Kevin Costner has been spotted here as has Billy Zane.

For a different theme drop by Pasha, where the inspiration draws from the south of France and the jazz-infused disco music throbs into the night. One half of Pasha is a popular French restaurant, the other is Chicago's hottest spot for dancing the night away. If dancing is not your thing, Pasha boasts a champagne bar in the (ladies only) powder room where tête-à-têtes are aided and abetted with bubbly from the establishment's celebrated wine and champagne list.



Wild Ginger

You don't need to have a love of money to enjoy Chicago's hot new Mint, but it helps. This SoHo-inspired club unabashedly flaunts money as its theme, and the top of its bar is adorned with currencies from around the world. The cash bar, so to speak, pours mostly vodka drinks, along with a menu of martinis for the well-dressed crowd that often includes sports heroes Ron Harper and Frank Thomas.

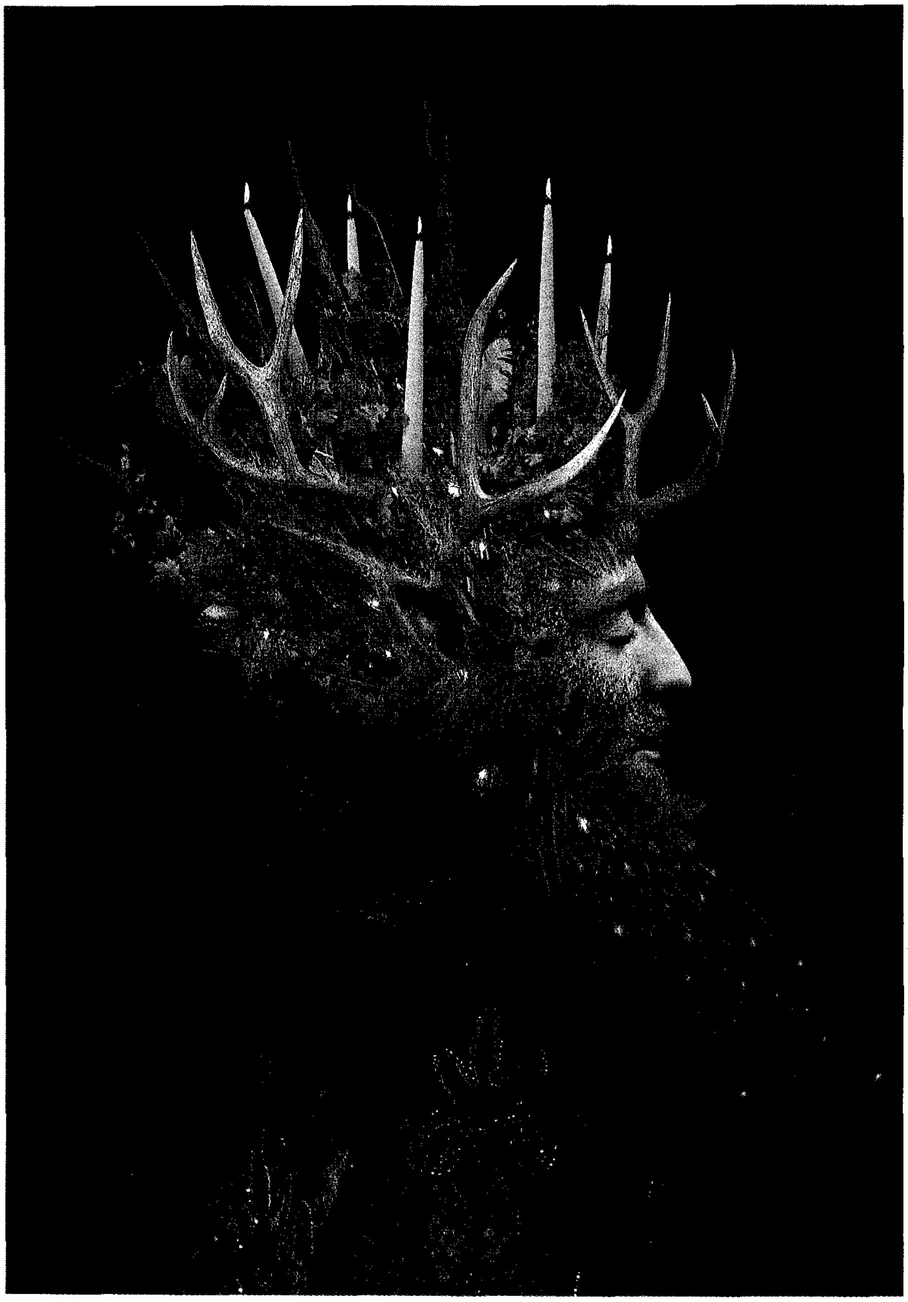
SPRINTING TOWARD SEATTLE

Talk about wild and exotic, Seattle these days is hotter than the latest computer chip. And when the great minds of the software industry want to process fine food and festive libations they head straight for Wild Ginger, home to the country's first satay bar, where locals and visitors alike hobnob in an atmosphere as teeming with excitement as Bangkok itself.

Our nation's penchant for spicy, Pan-Asian cuisine has apparently caught up with what Wild Ginger's owners Rick and Ann Yoder have been promoting for nearly a decade. Bill Gates occasionally strolls in, as do Mike McCready and Stone Gossard of Pearl Jam. The spacious décor elegantly fuses East/West sensibilities, although the undulating rhythms of live jazz and blues on Monday nights tilts things decidedly westward.

"German Riesling wines are very popular here because they offer a nice balance to our spicy cuisine," says Rick Yoder. "But our customers also rave about our specialty drinks like the refreshing Mango Daiquiri, or our Ginger Martini, which is made from fresh ginger we age ourselves in glass

In a past life I was a fir tree. One day somebody chopped me down and covered me with decorations. Next thing I knew, they threw me back outside. I remember thinking, "What was that all about?"



In a past life I was pure, glacial spring water.

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bottles. It has an attractive amber tint when poured straight into a martini glass and finishes with a bit of a bite."

Stylish Seattle hosts include Marco Rulff and Donna Moodie, who operate two of the city's most popular bistros, Marco's Supperclub and the newly opened Lush Life. At Marco's, where the nick-nack décor is as inventive and eclectic as the menu, locals know to order Seattle's tastiest appetizer—bundles of sage leaves covered with rice flour, fried to a golden crisp, and served with three different dipping sauces. Asian spice is in the hot and fiery details of the chef's cooking style, which involves curries, rubs (dry spices rubbed into the meat and left to marinade), and chutneys. At Lush Life, on the other hand, the menu veers more toward classic Italian specialties.

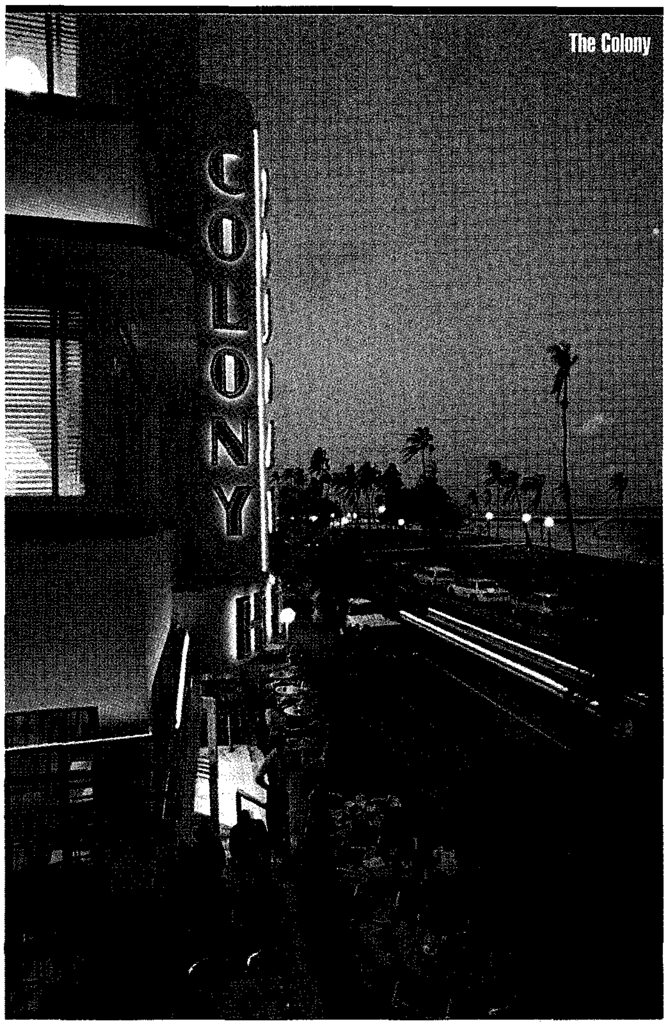
And what are people drinking? "We serve a huge assortment of drinks like Kamikazes, Cosmopolitans, and Lemon Drops, all in ten-ounce, fun glassware that might have come from Goodwill or the Salvation Army," says Moodie. "It's kitschy, which is in keeping with the décor. People love it."

GOING HOLLYWOOD

If it's Monday night in Los Angeles we need to be at Lucky Seven. There isn't a better way to kick off a new week than dropping in on this star-studded bar and restaurant where Jeff Goldblum and his jazz band perform every Monday night, and where Minnie Driver and Jon Lovitz have joined them onstage for an impromptu appearance.

Tuesday's are saved for The Little Door, and by midweek the place to be is at a club called North on bustling Sunset Strip. If Santa Monica is where one gravitates, the fashion herd (a group that often includes actor Gary Sinise) grazes at The Buffalo Club.

Of course, "in" spots shine and fade like shooting stars in Los Angeles but one that still glistens is Hollywood's Formosa, now under the watchful eye of third-generation owner Vince Jung. "We're definitely the 'Cheers' of Hollywood," says Jung, whose establishment's exterior and bar were among the locations used for Oscar winner "L.A. Confidential." Opened since 1939, Formosa is practically a culinary icon in Los Angeles, where regulars adore its Pan-Asian fusion cuisine and its vintage China-in-the-forties appeal. Nostalgia is on tap here not just with the décor but with what the bar serves: Mai Tai's, Dewars' Sidecars and Rusty Nails, along with single-batch bourbons and upscale tequilas.



"Many of our customers are transplanted from points east (New York, Chicago, and elsewhere) and they like to drink more than eat," says Jung. These days, people nibble alfresco on the new patio or enjoy a good cigar with brandy out on the smoking deck on the restaurant's upper level.

MIAMI: ON THE BEACH

Seemingly a day doesn't go by without a new bar, club, restaurant, or even a hotel opening in Miami's South Beach or Coconut Grove. Barely a month old, The Hotel on spiffy South Beach's Collins Avenue, is a former landmark hotel originally built in 1939. If The Hotel (formerly The Tiffany) appears impossibly fashionable with its jewel-inspired interiors, cool mosaics, and artisan detailing, it's no accident: Seventh Avenue whiz Todd Oldham designed it all, from the sofas, rugs, and pillows to the lighting, curtains, and dinner service.

Look for the hotel's lush indoor/outdoor tropical garden restaurant, Wish, fast becoming a destination for transplanted New Yorkers and serious gourmands. Chef Gary Robins won plaudits for his dishes at New York's Aja and Match Uptown.

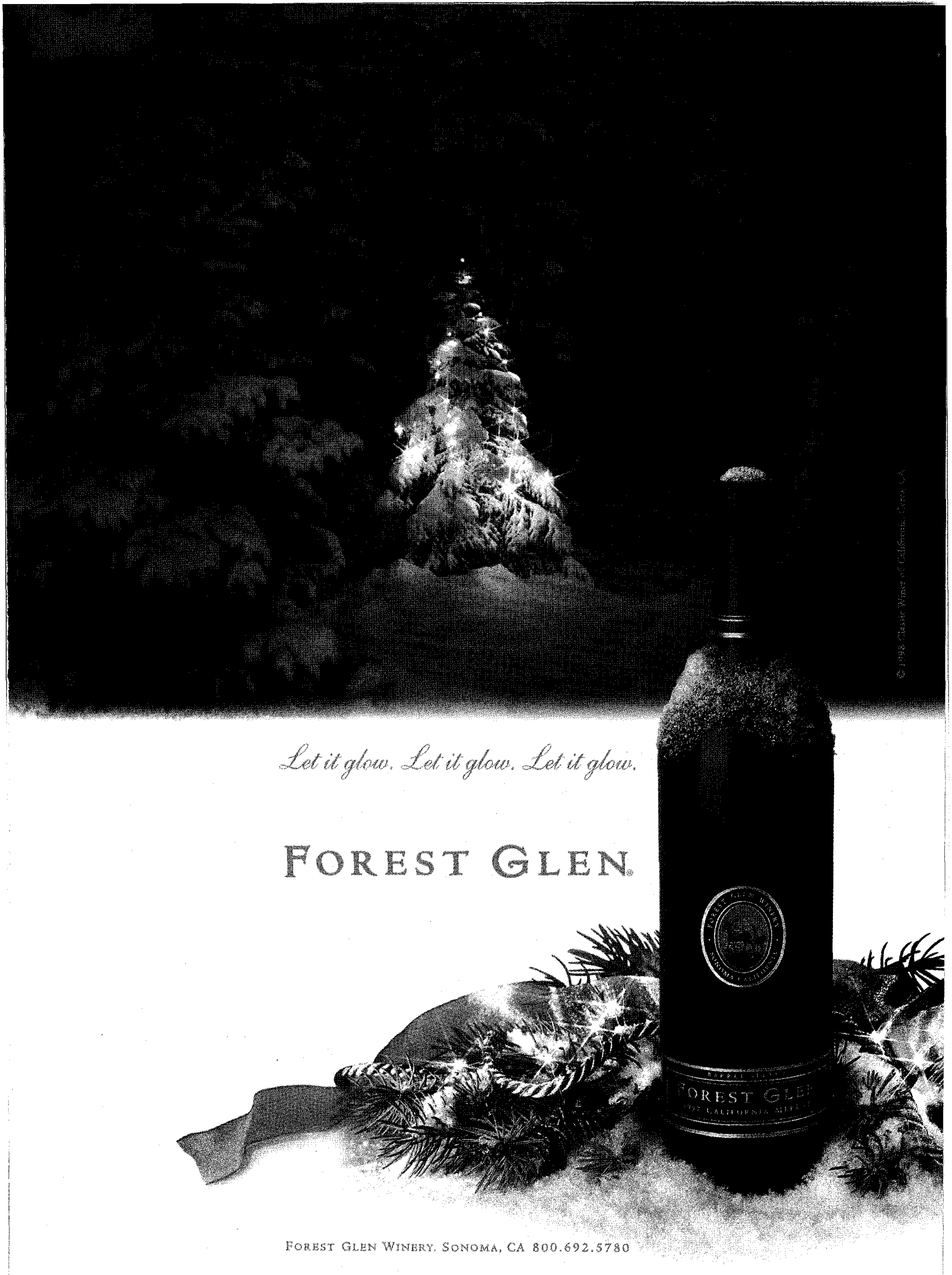
South Beach continues to be home to wondrous hotels and bars such as the Delano and the Colony, where exotic, colorful drinks from Finlandia martinis to Bacardi Rum Swizzles are as ubiquitous as hungry pelicans and flip-flops. The eye-catching, flavored martinis coordinate perfectly with the fashion crowd.

In nearby Coconut Grove, the high-tech Mezzanotte draws Miami's hippest, youngest crowd. On Friday nights, it is not unusual to see the glamorous set lined up three deep at the curving bar, waiting for tables and a chance to tuck into some of the restaurant's bountiful pasta with seafood specialties.

According to owner Piero Filpi, Mezzanotte's own peach-colored specialty, the South Beach, reigns supreme. It combines infused vodka with various fruit nectars and is shaken, not stirred, and poured into a huge martini glass. Bliss settles in after the first sip.

The night moves. And we move with it. Style and panache have their place. Elegance and luxury are back in fashion. We slide into a sultry martini as easily as we do a pair of Walter Steiger slingbacks. Vintage champagne tickles our fancy and our nose.

The night has a thousand eyes. And we want to see through them all.



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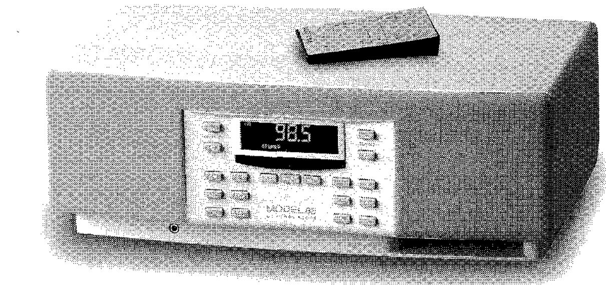
star, but his manner in person lacks that quality of narcissistic celebrity reverb which one senses in so many other stars—their tendency to feed on civilians' awe at being in the star's presence. He is a movie star, but he is physically unremarkable. At forty-two, he has the beginning of a double chin. Every actor in his league is sexier or more handsome than he is. At the Film Festival in Venice, he had a large pimple on his forehead, and his Armani suit, cut clunky but cool, in the late-nineties fashion, looked merely clunky on him.

Hanks's friends describe him as reticent, yet while answering the questions of a hundred foreign journalists in thirty interviews in Venice, he seemed both forthcoming and scrupulously candid. When he repeated certain answers a third and fourth time, he evidently felt obliged to let the reporter know that the lines were retreads, with an odd sort of meta-candor: "My stock answer in Venice is . . ."

Hanks's most frequent verbal tic is the phrase "in all honesty." And he seems to mean it. He doesn't hem and haw about his failures. " 'Bonfire' was a horrible movie," he told me. Nor does he dissemble about his success. Except for extremists like Donald Trump, almost every media-canny famous person slips automatically into mock humility when asked about the magnitude of his or her triumphs. Hanks is neither coy nor arrogant. "I have at my option the ability to do anything that I desire," he said when he was asked about future movie roles, but he admitted that this situation can stoke his vanity and create its own problems. He said he "screwed up" the writing and directing of his first movie, "That Thing You Do," for Twentieth Century Fox, partly because he had succumbed to a classic Hollywood yes-man syndrome. "I honestly thought, No, I'm too smart for that. I won't fall for it. Yet at the same time I was saying, 'Hey, you guys have got to make this movie because I'm a big star. What, you're going to say no to me? No way.' "

Hanks is a decent guy, as everyone says, but he makes no treacly show of saintliness (with the possible exception of his 1994 Oscar acceptance speech for "Philadelphia"). He is sincere, but he can also be ironic, and, in a particularly modish way, he is often simultaneously sincere and ironic. He refers to his "crack team of show-business experts,"



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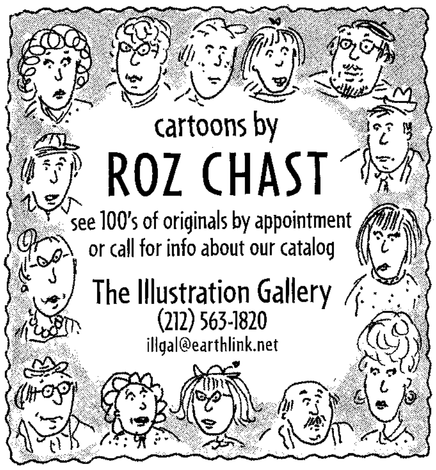

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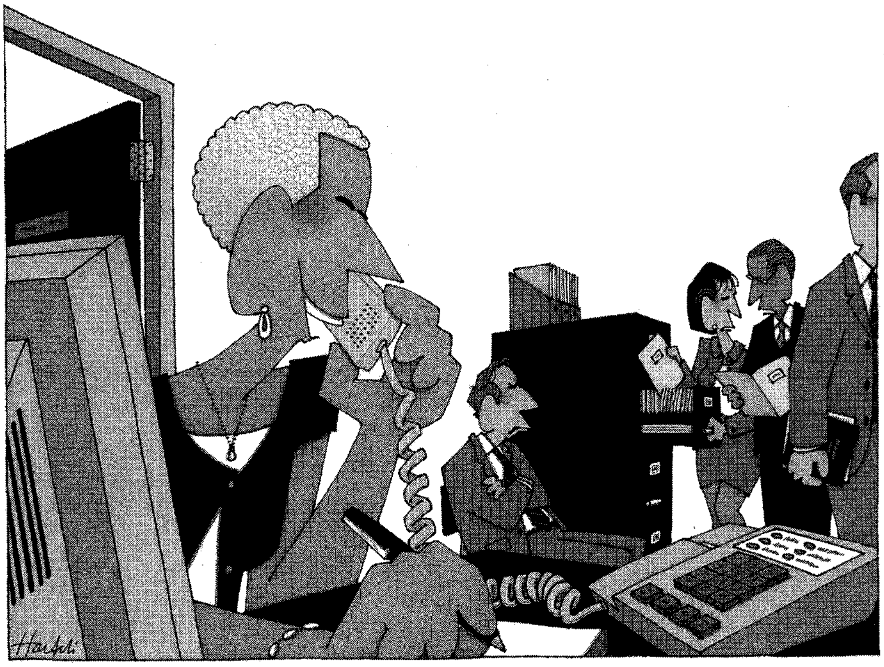
but, of course, he does employ a crack team of show-business experts: his agent, Richard Lovett, is the president of Creative Artists Agency. "Yes, I *am* a celebrity," he told an interviewer in Venice, making the sentence sound as if it were an ugly confession. One morning in October in a hotel suite in Nashville, where he was shooting an adaptation of Stephen King's "The Green Mile," he called to order fresh coffee, then imagined the room-service panic downstairs: "They're all running around. 'Mr. Hanks wants a pot of coffee. I'll take it! I'll take it!' "

When Hanks is talking to foreigners, his chronic American irony doesn't necessarily play. In his first interview in Venice, a translator served as his intermediary to two dozen Italian journalists. "Am I the first this morning? Make a note of that. Everyone's fresh. No one's cranky." They didn't smile. Someone asked about Steven Spielberg, who directed "Saving Private Ryan," and Hanks called him "a chucklehead," and said, "I want to slap him sometimes. Not that I have." The journalists didn't smile. Someone else asked if "Private Ryan" would lead to a resuscitation of the war-movie genre. "It had been declared dead by those incredible crack show-business experts who run motion pictures," Hanks said. He turned to his translator and said, "You'll translate that in a way that makes them laugh?" The Italians still didn't laugh, and he finally gave up.

Hanks's reflexive irony owes a lot to Steve Martin, whom he sees as a pivotal cultural figure. "If you went to Cub Scout meetings in the seventies, they'd do Steve Martin bits," Hanks said. "Everybody was 'Yeah, I'm a wild and crazy guy.' Instantaneously, it just seemed to permeate society. It was like a comet—white-hot at the front, and then the intensity kind of dissipated as all society changed, because of Steve Martin. And now everything is essentially like that. The sense of humor really hasn't changed that much."

Part of Hanks's appeal is his boyishness, which is evident when he talks about his job. "The thing I like about working in films is it's a blast," he said. Discussing the filming of "Private Ryan," he told me, "We got to dress up as Army men and carry cool weapons." Yet Hanks also displays a very grown-up moral seriousness. About the "message" of "Private Ryan," he said, "It's ambiguous in the exact fashion that the experience was. Is it worth risking eight men for one? There is no answer. The vast majority of movies that are going to try to communicate something do it in ways so there's just no question what the filmmaker's point is. 'These people were bad' or 'Cancer is a terrible thing.' "

Hanks is serious about yeoman-actor professionalism as well—being punctual, knowing lines, chatting with the crew. He seems to think of himself as a sort of super-duper character actor. "He carries with him a sort of very old-fashioned pull-up-your-socks, let's-get-the-job-done, there's-no-crying-in-baseball-or-in-any-other-aspects-of-my-life kind of thing," Nora Ephron said. "The older I get, the more interested I am in people who are not going to tell you their innermost hopes and fears. It's what he's pulling all these performances out of. But he isn't going to tell anyone about it, partly because it's none of your business, and partly because it's bad manners. It's America at its finest, at its most absolutely pre-Freudian finest."



"Mr. Curtis can't come to the phone right now. He's in the time-out chair."

HANKS'S attraction to old-fashioned mid-century Americanism is thorough. He has an overriding interest in the big sweep and the tiny artifacts of the American century from the thirties through the sixties. When I asked him what he'd been reading, he said he had just bought A. Scott Berg's biographies of Charles Lindbergh and Maxwell Perkins. The one TV show he made a point of watching recently was "The Cold War," on CNN. A number of times, he compared his generation's experience to that of his parents: "What is the great national consciousness we have participated in? The rock-and-roll culture. Not hugely demanding of us from the point of view of sacrifice." He has a production company that he named Playtone, as if he were a Brill Building impresario from 1964. He uses (earnestly and ironically) corny vintage phrases such as "jeepers creepers," "for crying out loud," and "Oh, landy." He collects portable manual typewriters, and the model he longs to find is called a Skywriter, which, he said, "was made specifically for using on the fold-down trays of the first transcontinental passenger planes."

Although he's nostalgic about the era of his boyhood, his personal fifties and sixties weren't particularly golden. His parents separated when he was five, and he was brought up by his father and two successive stepmothers in tatty apartments and houses in California and Nevada, with a shifting array of siblings and many step-siblings. His father was a kitchen manager, and worked long hours. Yet Hanks told me that his upbringing has been depicted in the press as unhappier than it really was. His father is dead, he said, and his mother lives in Northern California. I asked if he's in contact with her. He said, "See, the thing is I never lived with my mom. So she's

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tighter with the other kids in the family. I was the only one who just never lived with her. Sometimes we talk really honestly about this. I say, 'Mom, you didn't raise me!' There is a brand of peace that had to be made." His relationship with his sister and brothers, he said, was "not the tightest. We're kind of terse."

I told him one might easily imagine the opposite.

"That adversity brought us together?" he asked.

"That's the movie version," I said.

"Well," he told me, "life didn't quite work out that way."

When Nora Ephron first met with Hanks to discuss "Sleepless in Seattle," she recalls, he talked about almost nothing but his wife, the actress Rita Wilson. (The couple live in west Los Angeles with their two sons, aged eight and two, and with his sixteen-year-old daughter.) "He said that he had finally got the family he had never had," Ephron said. "That fact, I think, is the most important thing about him." Indeed, when we stopped talking about Hanks's family and started talking about his wife's, he brightened visibly, describing in detail his in-laws' escapes from Communist Bulgaria and Albania, and how he has embraced Greek Orthodoxy. ("It's all music and dance and food and smells and tradition. It's guilt-free.") He told me, "I have no best friend. The family is what takes up the vast amount of time."

"THE whole thing is about luck," Hanks said of his professional success. His first bolt of good fortune came in 1983. He was an out-of-work twenty-six-year-old co-star of a cancelled so-so sitcom. Ron Howard was casting "Splash," his third picture, for Disney, which was then a second-rate movie studio, and the era's really big stars—Dudley Moore, Burt Reynolds, Chevy Chase—passed on playing the lead. Hanks got the job.

Howard hired him again, a decade later, to star in "Apollo 13." In "Splash," Howard said, "his instincts were good, but they were verbal. And now he'd found this very powerful way to apply his imagination and his instincts in non-verbal ways. In the opening of the movie, he's watching Neil Armstrong walk on the moon. It's a group scene, and Hanks, as Jim Lovell, is feeling sort of wistful about the fact that he didn't

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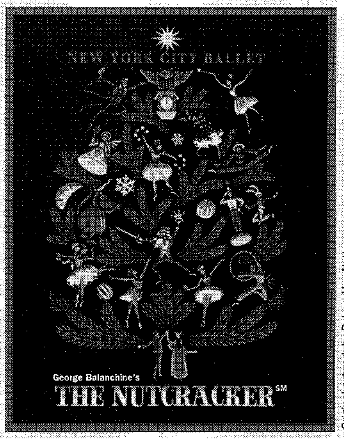

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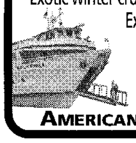
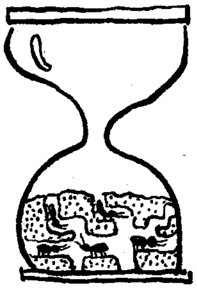


get to be the first guy to step on the moon. It's a wide shot. All of a sudden, I see what Tom's doing as he's watching this thing. So I quietly put a little dolly track in and zoomed in on him. He was communicating so much without saying a word, and it was a powerful moment."

In "You've Got Mail," scenes cut back and forth between Meg Ryan, who plays a bookshop owner, and Hanks, who plays a chain-store mogul, each sitting alone with a laptop, writing and reading E-mail. Ryan's scenes are fine, but to keep the audience entertained she does plenty of "business"—smiles, squints, grimaces. Hanks does much less apparent acting, but he's more interesting to watch. "I just don't know an actor that you could film sitting at a computer and be completely riveted by what he's doing," Ephron told me. "And he isn't 'doing' anything."

This gets into the slipperiest part of understanding Hanks's particular talents. Is it the movie character's regular-guy anguish and decency we feel or Tom Hanks's? If it's the former, he's a great actor. If it's the latter, the performance is less a display of craft than an appealing celebrity being appealing as the cameras roll. Hanks is riled by the idea that it's all easy for him. "Because I am that nice-guy Everyman, people say, 'Well, he's just playing himself again.' That's right, clear the set. They're all the same. Andy in 'Philadelphia' is just like Jim Lovell, and Forrest Gump is just like all the rest." He paused. "Maybe I'm oversensitive about it."



Hanks tries to prepare for his roles straightforwardly. He's amused by actors who attempt to erase the distinctions between fiction and reality. "You work with these guys who try to embody the character all the time. 'Call me by my character's name.'" Hanks screwed up his face in derision. "Then what are you doing in the makeup trailer?" I asked Hanks if he would ever star in a nine-million-dollar independent film. He said, "I'm open to any sort of suggestions. The problem is I read those things and say, 'Look, I don't get it. This is just the same scene over and over and over again. You don't get any credit from me because it's only a nine-million-dollar movie.' 'What do you mean?'" he said in a parody of an artiste voice. "'Don't you want to be a renegade?' If someone had come to me and said, 'Do you want to make "Fargo"?' I'd have said, 'Well, yeah.' But I didn't get to read that.

"I can tell in seven pages of reading a screenplay if I'm interested in doing it," Hanks told me. "More often than not, you read stuff that just doesn't work. It has no surprises in it. The character for me always has to have some logic to him that I understand. You can't project upon a role something that really isn't there. You can't say, 'Oh, see, I'm going to have this funny walk, and that's going to make people understand.' But it doesn't say anything about a funny walk in the script, and chances are the director is going to say, 'Hey, stop doing that funny walk.'"

In fact, a funny walk was his key to turning Jimmy Dugan, the women's baseball manager in "A League of Their

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Own," into a character who made sense to him. "The script described the character as a fifty-two-year-old broken-down alcoholic. I said"—to Penny Marshall, the director—"'Look, I don't want to play a fifty-two-year-old broken-down alcoholic. I want to play a thirty-six-year-old broken-down alcoholic.' That ended up changing the whole dynamic of the character. I said, 'Look, if he's thirty-six, how come he's not still playing ball? How come he's not serving in the war? This way, I just have to show up with a limp, and the entire character is explained.' And Penny said"—he mimicked her nasal Bronx whine—"'I just don't want you to be cute. Because then everybody's going to wonder how come the girls don't like the cute guy.' So I said, 'How about if I get fat?' And I've been fat ever since."

Hanks will laboriously force a script into shape. "One thing I find myself doing is removing the question marks from my dialogue," Hanks told me in an E-mail. "Characters often ask bullshit questions like 'Are you saying you'll actually run for water commissioner?' I don't know how to do that—ask the expository question." Nora Ephron recalls that before Hanks had committed himself to making "Sleepless in Seattle" they got together every day for weeks with her sister and co-writer, Delia Ephron, to work on the script. "We essentially rewrote every scene he was in. We would have these meetings where he was extremely cranky, and he would say, 'Well, this isn't what I would say in this scene,' and he would crankily explain what he might say. It was always funny and we'd type it up. He knows what he needs in a scene. If it's a comedy, he needs a joke. He doesn't always have to have the last word in the scene, but if he has the second-to-last word it should probably be the funniest line." "Private Ryan," he told me, started out as a mess. "Captain Miller was a stock, one-dimensional war hero who'd won the Medal of Honor and chomped on a cigar and said, 'Come on, you sons of bitches.' There were so many degrees of falsehood." He talked to Spielberg, and "they changed every word of it."

On a day off from shooting in Nashville, Hanks was hanging around his hotel room in a T-shirt and jeans, eating a club sandwich, thinking about searching for the original Grand Ole Opry, or visiting Civil War battle sites, which he'd just found on the Web. I asked if there were any movie-star careers that he regarded as a model. He considered the question.

"Is there anybody who started making movies in the eighties, which is essentially when I became a movie star?"

"Tom Cruise," I said.

"Tom's a very smart guy. He takes none of this stuff lightly. He's very focussed and very energetic." Hanks paused, tensed a little, and in what he left unsaid I may have detected a whiff of rivalry or disrespect. "But I look at my own career and think, Hey, that's going pretty good. Hey, I'd like to have a career like . . . like I have!"

Hanks likes his knack for career management to look improvised. "The Soviets had five-year plans," he told me, "and look where it got them." The line is something that Ronald Reagan might have said. In fact, Hanks's career is Reaganesque—Reagan as politician, not Reagan as movie actor. Hanks started out in the seventies with a clear idea of what he wanted: to act well in good movies. He has tried to hold to his vision, but not in any doctrinaire way, or with a lot of introspection or tactical fussing.

There are two reasons that Hanks made so many awful movies during the eighties: because he is an agreeable guy, and because the cash was irresistible. He was paid a hundred thousand dollars to star in "Splash." Immediately, his fee increased tenfold. "I made a particularly disappointing string of cheap comedies in which there was a goofy guy who does or does not get laid by the woman of his dreams," he recalls. "My own rationale for taking them on wasn't what it should have been. I took whatever gig I got, whether I was tired, or whether I understood the material or not."

The last terrible movie he talked himself into making was Brian De Palma's unfunny, tone-deaf version of "Bonfire of the Vanities," which came out in 1990. De Palma's Sherman McCoy was not just flawed but weak through and through—callow rather than hubristic. "Ultimately, he was a pussy," Hanks said. "It comes down to that." Not far beneath his jocularity, though, was residual bitterness. "In the nature of how Brian wanted to make that movie, McCoy couldn't be any-

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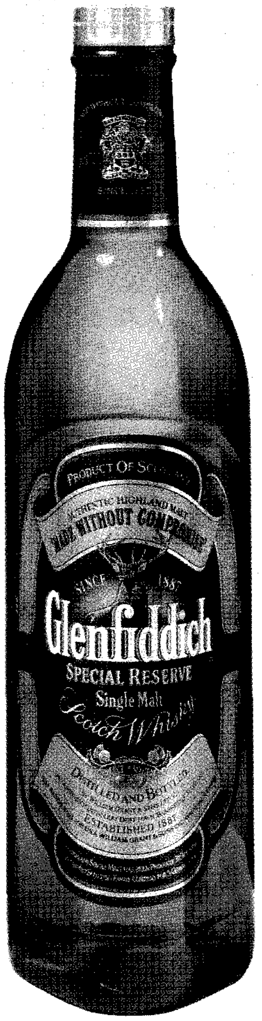
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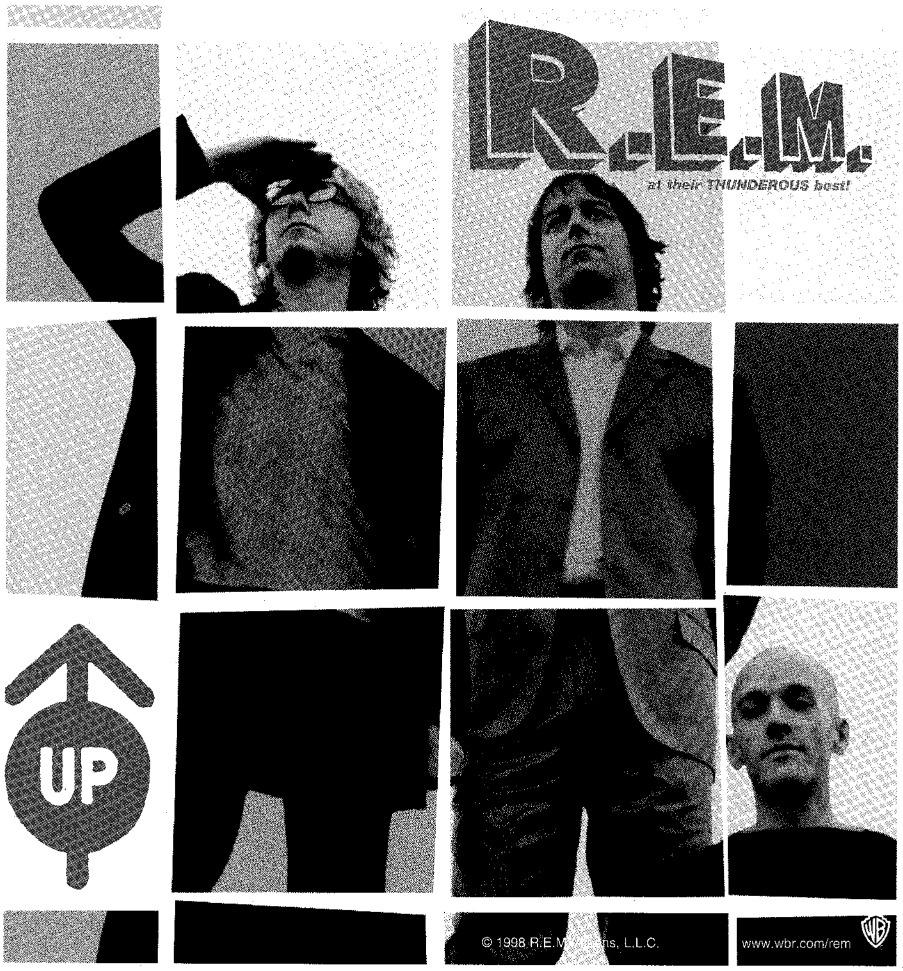
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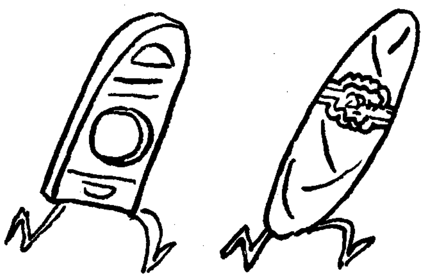
thing other than a pussy. Therefore, there was no mystery to it. He was a pussy from the beginning, and he was a pussy all the way through. He was just a big fat pussy."

"After 'Bonfire,'" Ron Howard recalls, "Tom came into my office. He basically said, 'I'm getting these leads in these movies, but how do I not do what happened to Elliott Gould?'" Hanks told me, "I realized that it was much more important to say no to stuff than it was to say yes. I had fuck-you money." First he signed with Creative Artists, which was the most powerful talent agency in Hollywood. "My agent said, 'What do you want to do?' I said, 'Well, it's not like I know what I want to do, but I sure know what I don't want to do. And I don't want to play guys anymore going "Oh, I'm not in love and I wish I was"'"—the voice is an unfunny funny-guy whine—"'"and I'm just trying to get to work today but my car keeps breaking down in funny ways." They're boring, they've got nothing to do with my life, and I don't want to have to waste time even considering them.' And that was that. It was like a huge stack of work on my desk that just got thrown away, and what was left was, you know," he recalled with a grin, "much less to choose from."

Hanks's fee in 1991, when he made this decision, was around five million dollars a movie. I asked if it was easy to turn down all those five-million-dollar paydays. "Oh, yeah," he said. "I mean, how much money do you need?" He paused to consider his rhetorical question, and added, "I've since got more."

This is the way that doing the right thing is supposed to work in America: virtue as its own reward, plus a cash jackpot. Describing his dizzy good fortune, Hanks said, "You just keep walking into some new brand of bonanza." He got twenty million dollars to star in "You've Got Mail," which was paid as



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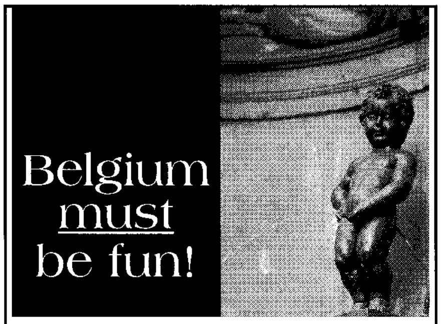

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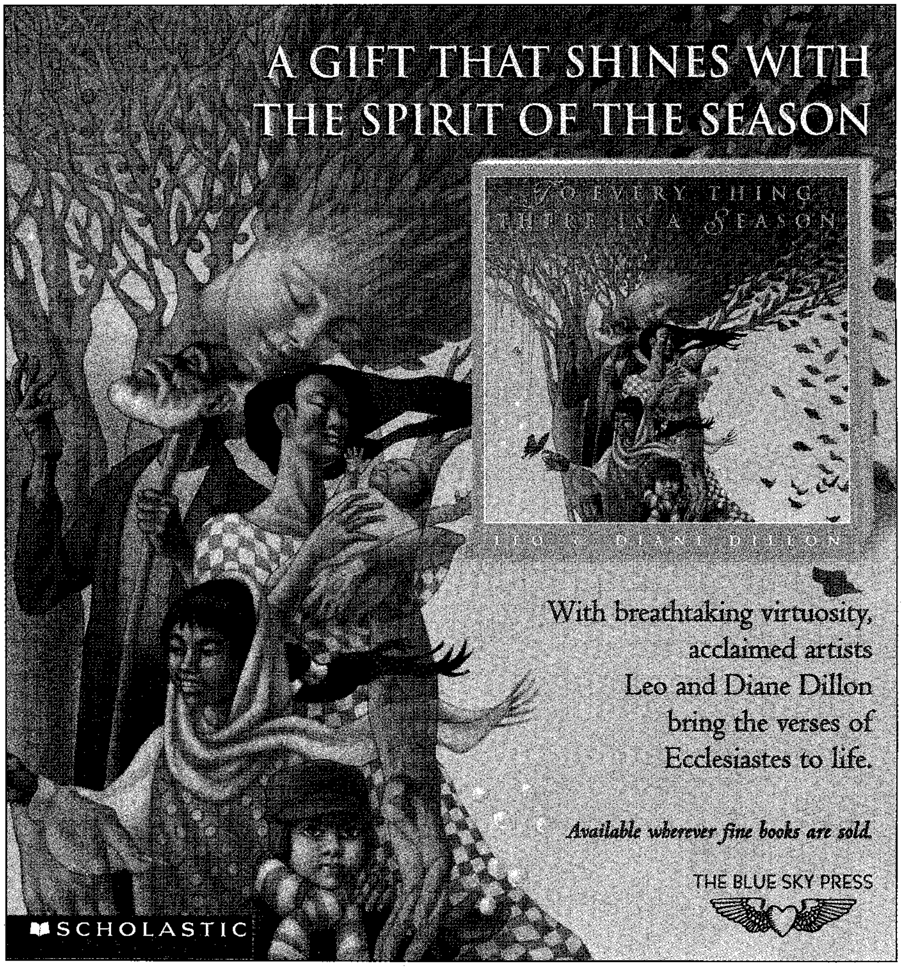
an advance against a large share of the gross. In Venice, an English reporter asked him if "Private Ryan" was "the proverbial movie you'd do for nothing." "We did it for nothing!" he replied. "I mean," he immediately corrected himself, "we do have a piece of the back end." A huge piece. His share of the worldwide box-office take, which stands at three hundred and eighty-three million dollars and counting, will earn him many tens of millions for playing Captain Miller.

DESPITE Hanks's follow-the-bliss philosophy about choosing movie roles, he's not naïve about show business. He once referred to "a franchise sensibility that isn't just about fast foods." Meaning Tom Hanks the brand? "Yeah," he replied seriously. "And you've got to be really careful. You've got to protect it. Because otherwise . . . You don't want to become that brand that nobody— You don't want to become Palmolive soap." Hanks understands that, as with any established consumer product that is perpetually tweaked to remain novel—miniature M&M's, fat-free Häagen-Dazs, the all-color *Times*—managing his movie-star brand presents difficulties. "The thing that's the most difficult is the power of the new. If you're not being new somehow, there's something wrong." He recited again his string of seven hit movies, and then said hopefully, even a little anxiously, "Well, there was something new in all of those."

So Tom Hanks's career has bloomed because he is pretty smart, pretty talented, and very lucky. Still, why is he so singularly successful, and why right now? The conventional wisdom is that he benefits from being nice-looking but sexless. "Male stars who achieve megastardom have the quality of being attractive to women and non-threatening to men," said Bob Zemeckis, who directed him in "Forrest Gump," the most successful non-extraterrestrial, non-dinosaur, non-passenger-ship-disaster movie ever made. "For you to be a giant male star, men have to want to go have a beer with you."

Another of Hanks's directors told me, "I don't think you'll ever see him playing a part where he has to be sex-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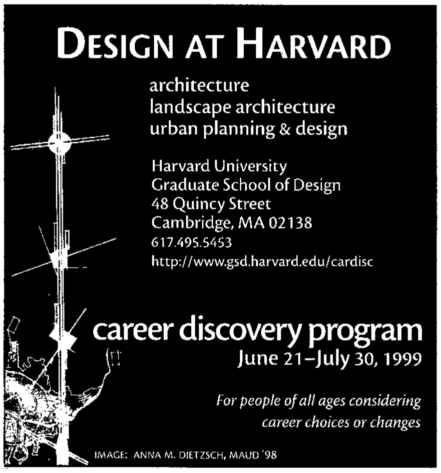
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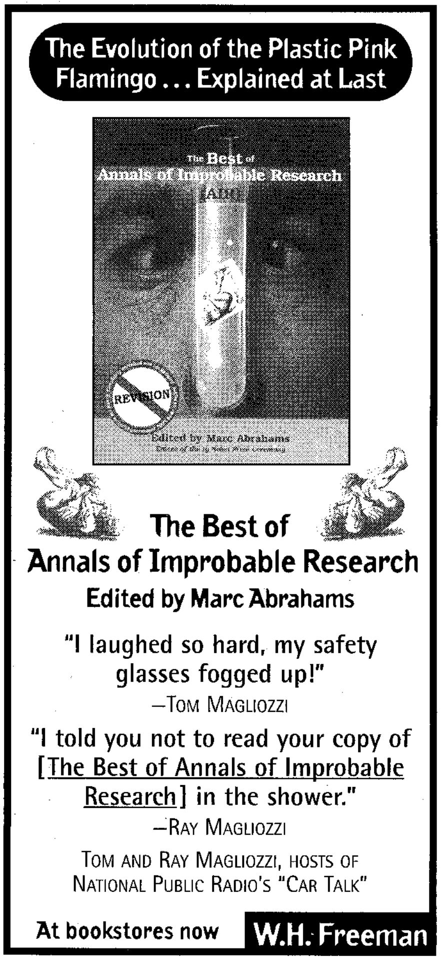
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ual." I asked Hanks about that. "I don't actively avoid roles that are robustly sexualized," he replied. "It's just that the stories I have been drawn to have not had sex as one of the motors that drove the narrative. There are so many other things to explore."

He doesn't play Lotharios, and he doesn't play villains. "I'm always dealing with 'When are you going to play a bad guy?' And the answer is so simple: As soon as I find one I can understand." Hanks plans to take his first post-"Bonfire" half step in the dark direction next year, by starring in Martin Scorsese's "Dino," a life story of Dean Martin. But while the singer may have been sexy and unheroic, he definitely wasn't evil. In trying to figure out how to play him, Hanks seems, unwittingly, to be digging out parallels between Tom Hanks and Dean Martin. On stage and TV, he suggested, Martin played "Dean Martin," a semi-fictionalized character, distinct from Dean Martin the person. Also, Hanks told me, "He couldn't say no to anybody."

But, for all his shrewd career management, Hanks himself has only the vaguest idea about what drives the Hanks phenomenon. "In order to explain this cockamamie career I've had?" he said. "I do not know. And I do not want to know. Because then I might do something different."

This is the secret of Tom Hanks's success: Almost all the movies in which he has starred during the nineties have had big social themes—women's equality ("League"), AIDS ("Philadelphia"), the sixties and Vietnam ("Gump"), American national purpose ("Apollo 13" and "Private Ryan"), and, next year, capital punishment and racism ("The Green Mile"). Even "You've Got Mail," in which a big chain bookseller puts a little Upper West Side store out of business, is a nuanced depiction of the mixed blessings of late capitalism.

In his hit films, Hanks is not just the protagonist but a real hero. "I don't think I ever play anyone larger than life," he told me. But that is the point. Hanks has created human-size heroes whom jaded contemporary audiences can accept and embrace not in spite of the characters' flaws and contradictions but because of them.

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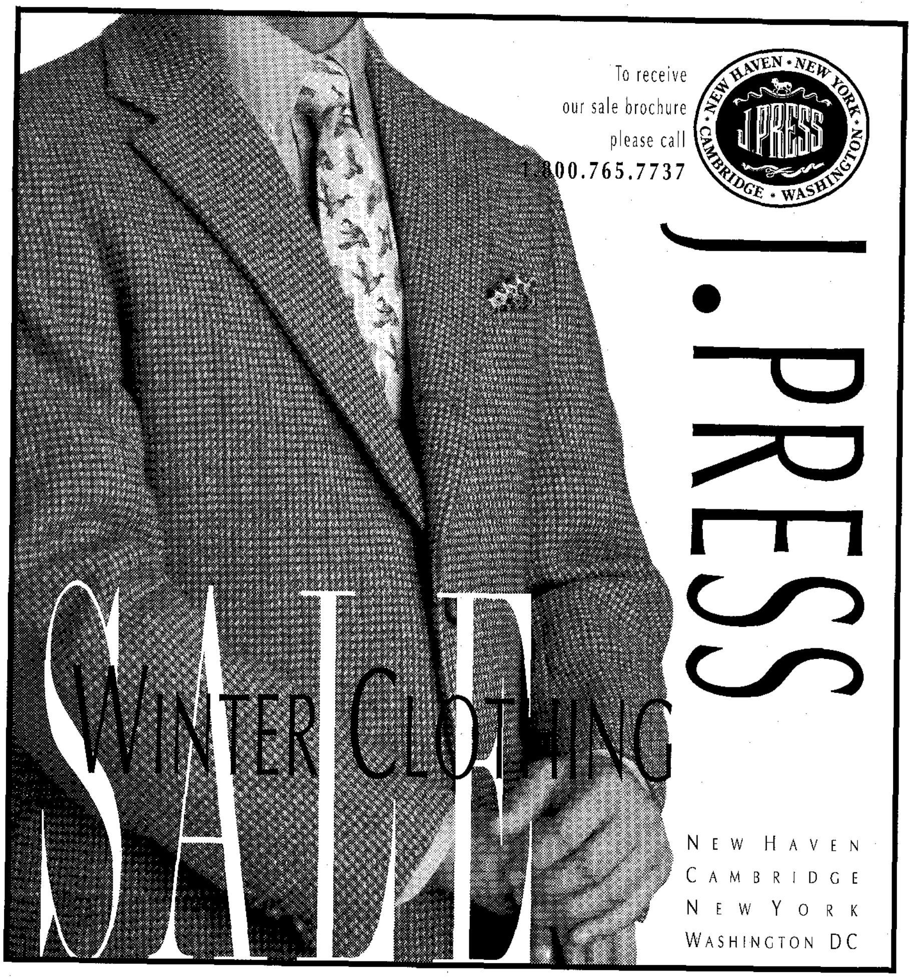
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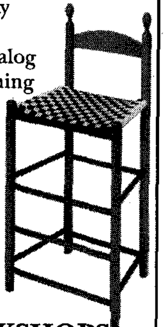
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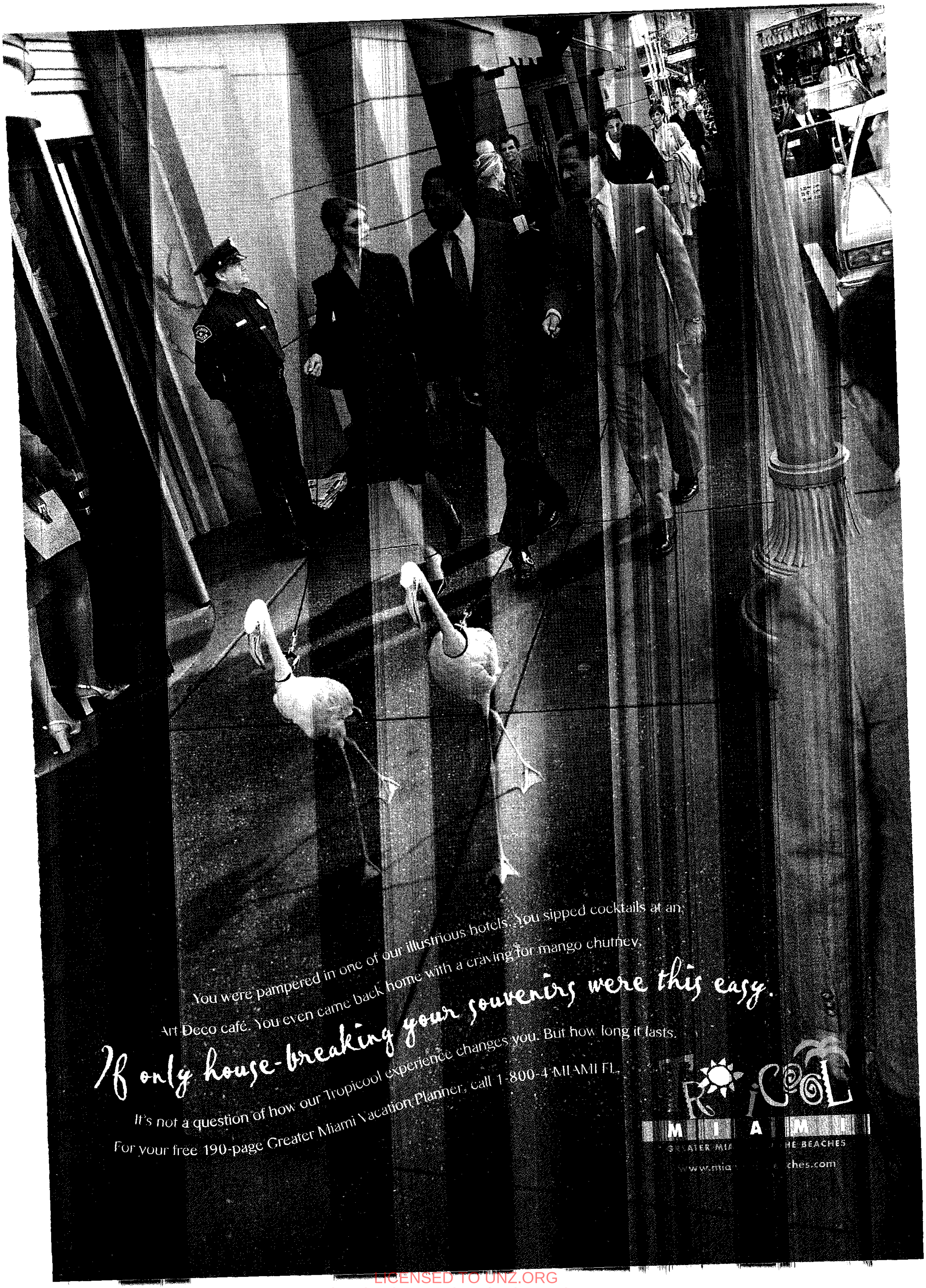
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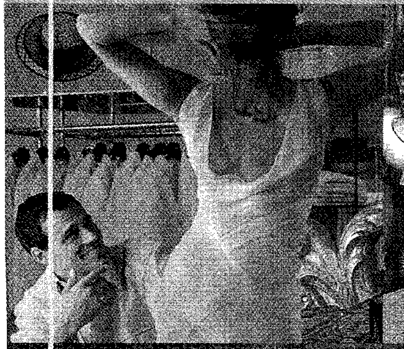

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MIAMI INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW [illegible] areas and [illegible] nationally [illegible] the latest [illegible] activities, [illegible] boat [illegible] expanded [illegible] Watson [illegible] -8410.

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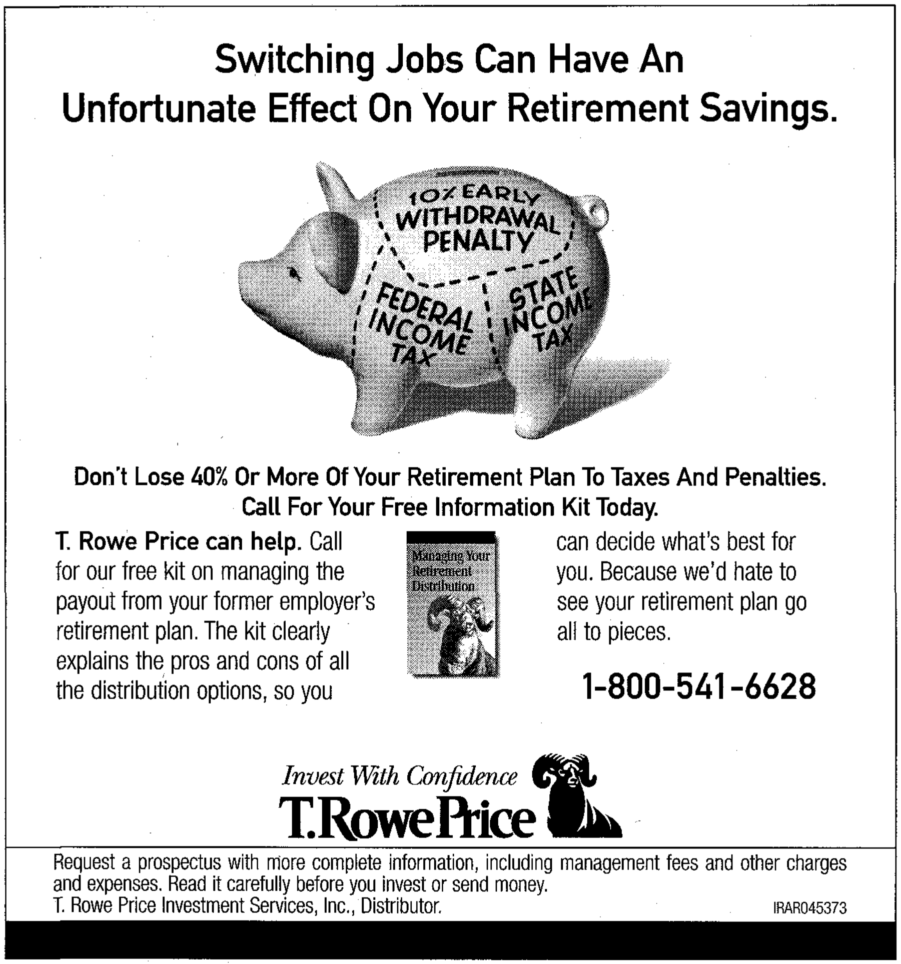
end of a classic dialectical evolution. Movies from the thirties through the fifties had plenty of traditional heroes, the John Waynes and Errol Flynns, essentially transplanted from pulp fiction. In the sixties and seventies, such old-fashioned heroes came to seem untenable to the younger mass audience—not just ridiculous but retrograde. Then came the cool outlaw antihero—the sorts of characters played by Steve McQueen and Jack Nicholson, Al Pacino and Robert De Niro. During the eighties, there was a pseudo revival of traditional heroism, superheroic icons in cartoony quotation marks—Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger, Indiana Jones, Superman, Batman. And in this decade the genre has been retrofitted yet again, by Tom Hanks, who has almost single-handedly modernized and revitalized the American movie hero.

In Venice, he told an interviewer, "I think I represent the sensibilities of my generation." He knows intuitively what it takes in a script and a performance to allow people like him—younger people, ironic people, people who came of age in a cynical, relativistic, media-saturated era—to really believe in a hero as they have not done since childhood. Hanks is also able to portray a credible modern hero persuasively because of those blurry lines between him and his characters. It's a kind of movie-star fusion energy. When people see him on television, they see his capacity for being inspired (by the gay high-school teacher he thanked in his Oscar acceptance speech for "Philadelphia," by the soldiers on Omaha Beach, by the space program) and sense its authenticity,



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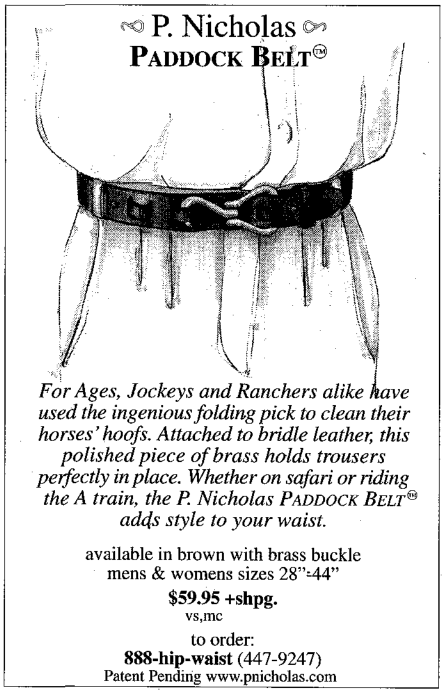

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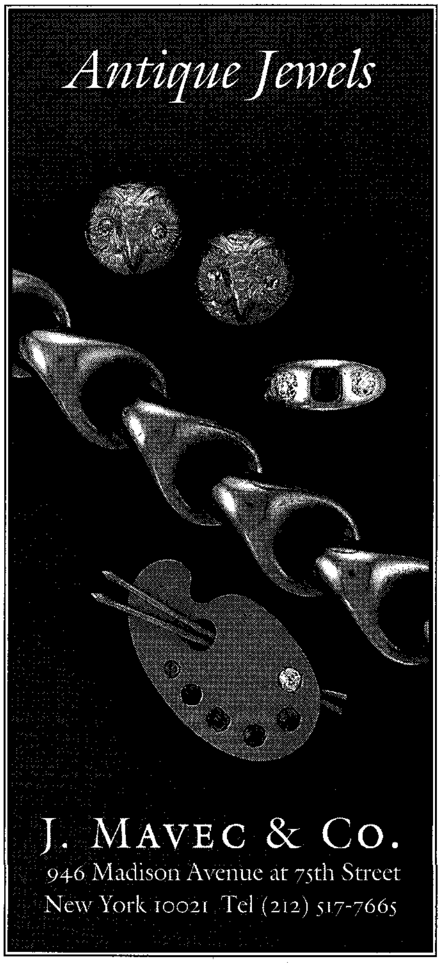

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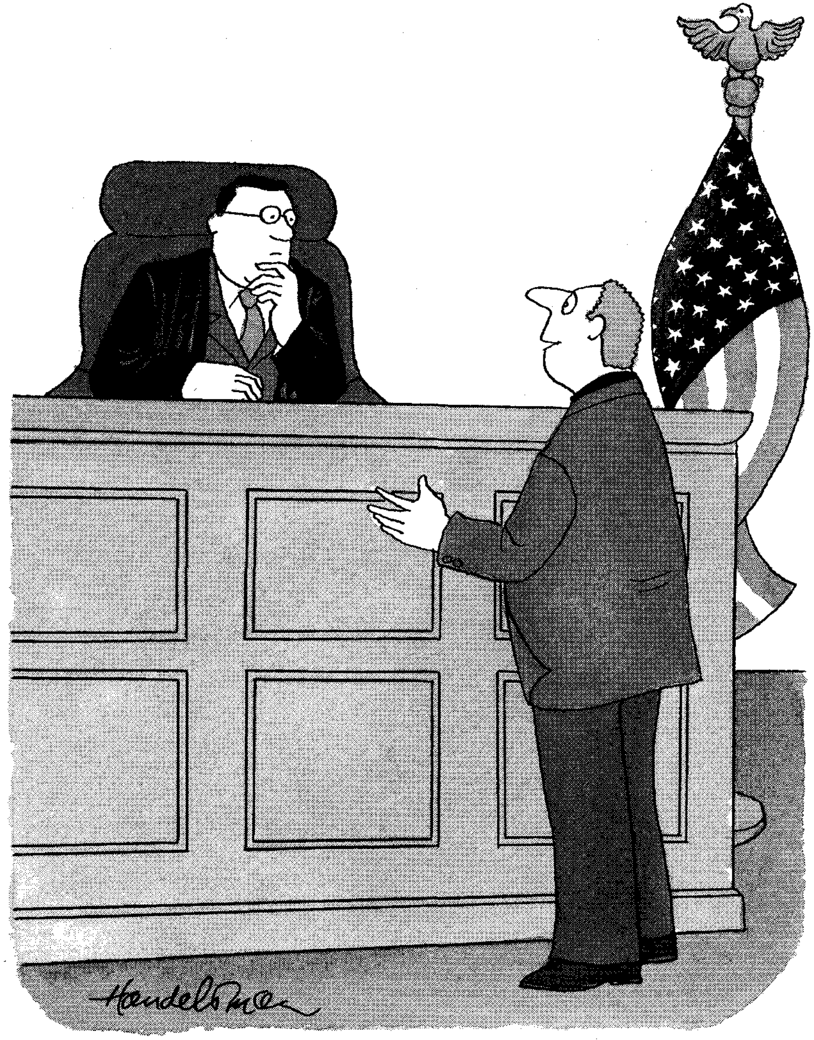

"Freedom and crime go hand in hand, Your Honor. Look at Russia."

• •

which persuades them to believe in his make-believe heroes all the more.

THE man who still believes in heroes and the old-fashioned virtues also maintains a faith in politics, and what he unself-consciously calls "the good fight." His own politics are almost oxymoronic: He's a moderately conservative Hollywood Democrat. He's a death-penalty proponent who said "God bless America" at the end of an Oscar speech but finds the "religious right that controls the Republican Party kind of scary." He's an actor-director-producer who decries the "despicable, shallow" run of Hollywood entertainment and "pornography delivered to the home" on cable TV. Yet he believes in "this concept that the government can do work that is really good. And it's not just building roads and bridges. I think that the government can do things that truly do better society and give people a hand up and still let them do what they want to do."

Hanks and his wife have stayed overnight at the White House three times during the last five years. About Bill Clinton he said, "I'm friendly with him. But I don't think I've ever had a true connective conversation with him. I just can't. I'm still too much in the 'Jeepers creepers, he's talking to me' kind of thing."

When Hanks bought a new house in Los Angeles not long ago, there were rumors that he was buying it for the Clintons, just as the President's friendship with Spielberg and his two partners, Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen, has propelled rumors that Clinton will become a DreamWorks executive after he leaves office. The house is definitely for the Hanks family, not the Clintons, but Hanks did write a check for the President's legal-defense fund, a donation he now says he "regrets." "We gave ten thousand bucks. Very early on. In all honesty, in the light of events since, it would be awfully hard to say now, 'Oh, here, let me help you out with this problem.' "

"Or buy him a house," I joked.

"Or buy him a house. But—well, the other side has plenty of figures that pony up an awful lot of dough, too. So you try to fight fire with fire, or something." He paused, unwilling to finish the thought earnestly, and added, "But he ain't getting that house. I'll tell you that right now. Forget it. And he ain't workin' at the Playtone Company, either."

The definitive President of Hanks's lifetime was a charming, friendly movie actor from modest middle-American circumstances. Given the example of Ronald Reagan, who didn't enter politics until his fifties, the idea of Tom Hanks, candidate, does not seem so far-fetched. What about a term in the Senate, I suggested half seriously, followed by a run for the Presidency? I expected a snort, a roll of the eyes, an emphatic disavowal. But instead he said, vaguely, "I'd have to know more about law or economics."

Later, Hanks sent me an E-mail that was a squishy non-denial denial of political ambition but addressed his potential at length. "My image is really a good one," he wrote. "I made a nice acceptance speech on TV a couple of times. I handle myself pretty well in the glare of the entertainment media. The actual ideology that anyone can glean as projected by my appearances on TV is that America is good because we are all so different and respecting each other is not so hard a thing to do. Not a bad platform, I suppose, to run for some office."

Yet he does not seem to yearn for political office, or even to direct more films. He professes to be a man who has already fulfilled every ambition. He swears there are only two things he wishes he had done differently: "I wish I had learned how to floss my teeth sooner. I wish I had taken piano lessons when I was eight years old." He added, "If I wanted to go way, way, way, way, way, way back, I could say, 'Jeez, I should have got out of high school and gone right across the bridge into San Francisco, and tried to get into the American Conservatory Theatre.' But, hey, you know what? I turned out to be a movie star! So it worked out O.K." ♦

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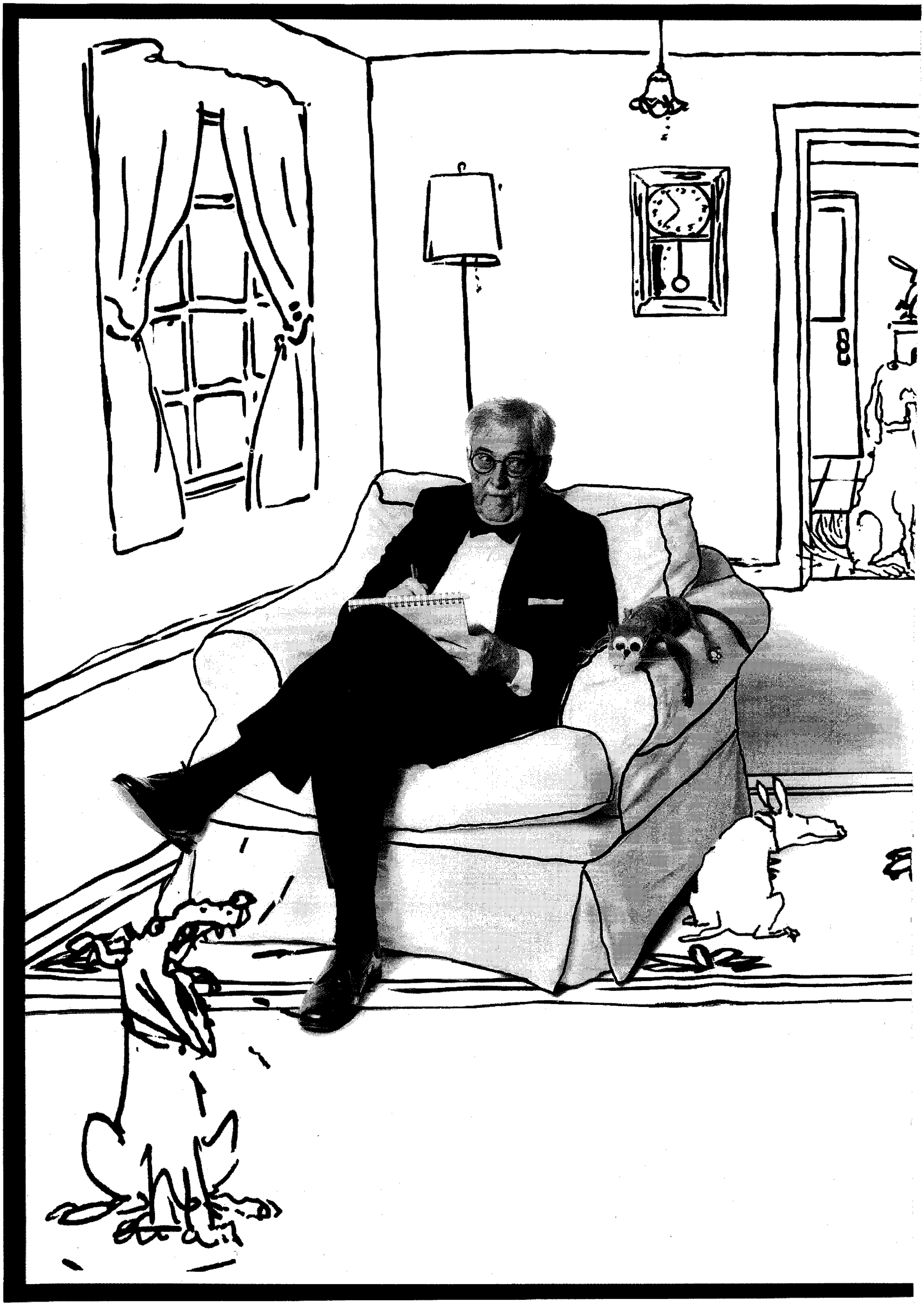
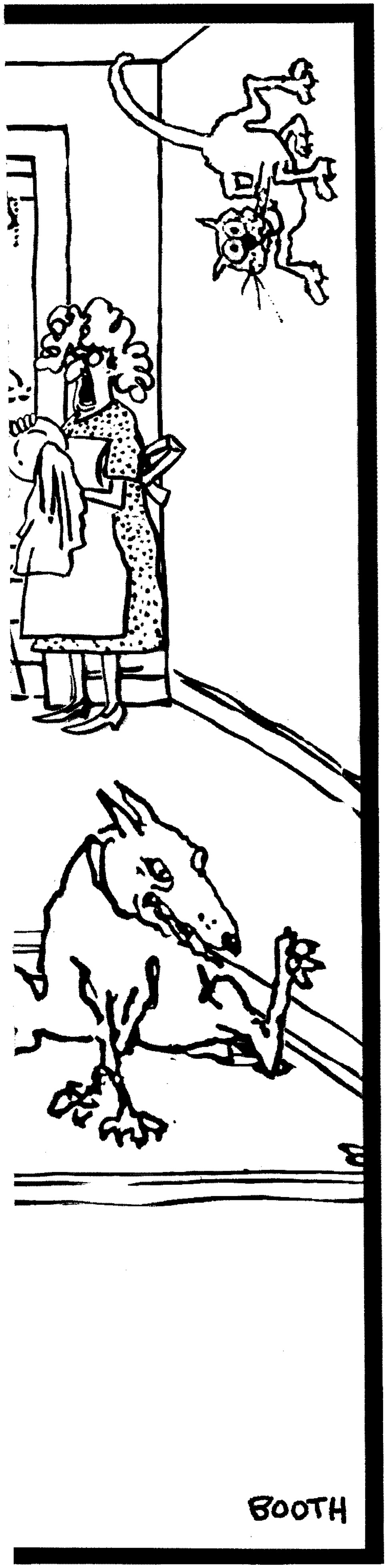




PROFILE

BOOTH COUNTRY

The cartoonist's life is everything it's cracked up to be.

BY DAVID OWEN

No one gets a bigger kick out of George Booth's cartoons than Booth himself does. As he reads the caption of one of his favorites, you can hear laughter begin to back up behind his words, pushing his voice to a higher pitch. Tiny tears appear at the corners of his eyes. With three words left, he can't contain his joy, and he lets out a loud, surprising laugh, the kind that would make you turn and smile if you heard it two stores away at a shopping mall. Years ago, Booth's pleasure in his work forced his wife, Dione, to evolve a method of sleeping that didn't require peace, quiet, or dark.

Booth has been cracking himself up with cartoons for this magazine for close to thirty years. For just as long, his drawings have been fixtures on that versatile precursor of the Web page, the American refrigerator door. Many recurring elements of his work—household pets, guillotines, car mechanics, bathtubs, ironing boards, junk-covered tables, skewed light fixtures, and dysfunctional spouses—can by now be considered permanent additions to the iconography of humor. No one familiar with his œuvre can look at an English bull terrier and not wonder whether its equine muzzle, pointed ears, and claustrophobically arranged eyes weren't inspired by Booth's drawings, rather than the other way around. A "Booth cat," his fans know, is any sprawling or psychotically agitated feline—especially one that belongs to a large collection of similar creatures strewn like old socks around some unappealing kitchen floor. His interpretation of the yard sale is definitive. His scenes of marital incongruity have substantially extended the field of battle in that ongoing war between men and women which was memorably illustrated in these pages by James Thurber.

Booth's cartoons today seem so inextricably a part of the fabric of *The New Yorker* that it's almost hard to believe that the first issue, back in 1925, didn't contain one—maybe the one in which a bank teller pulls a pistol on a little old lady who is reaching into her pocketbook, and says, "If you withdraw *or* deposit your damn five dollars one more time this year, Mrs. Babcock, I'm going to shoot you!" But, of course, that couldn't have happened: Booth, at seventy-two, is a year younger than the magazine. More to the point, his first cartoon in these pages wasn't published until 1969, by which time he was in his forties and had been collecting *New Yorker* rejection slips for twenty years.

Why did *The New Yorker* take so long to recognize a cartoonist who later became one of its most instantly recognizable contributors? Part of the answer has to do with the way these things inevitably go, part has to do with Booth, and part has to do with the magazine itself. The epicenter of Booth's sense of humor lies far away from New York City, in the cornfields of northwestern Missouri, and it took a few years for the parties involved to figure out exactly what they had in common. After that, though, everybody got along fine.

The bestowing on children of ridiculous names—a cultural function that is nowadays performed mainly by professional athletes, rock stars, and movie actors—used to be handled by Missouri farmers. My great-grandfather Owen, who spent most of his life a few farms away from Booth's birthplace, in Mercer County, was named Risdon. He had local relatives named Fleeta, Orvall, Olin, Melton, Wilbert, and Roy Lyle. He named my grandfather Loyd Cylven, and my grandfather named my father the same thing. Finally, my

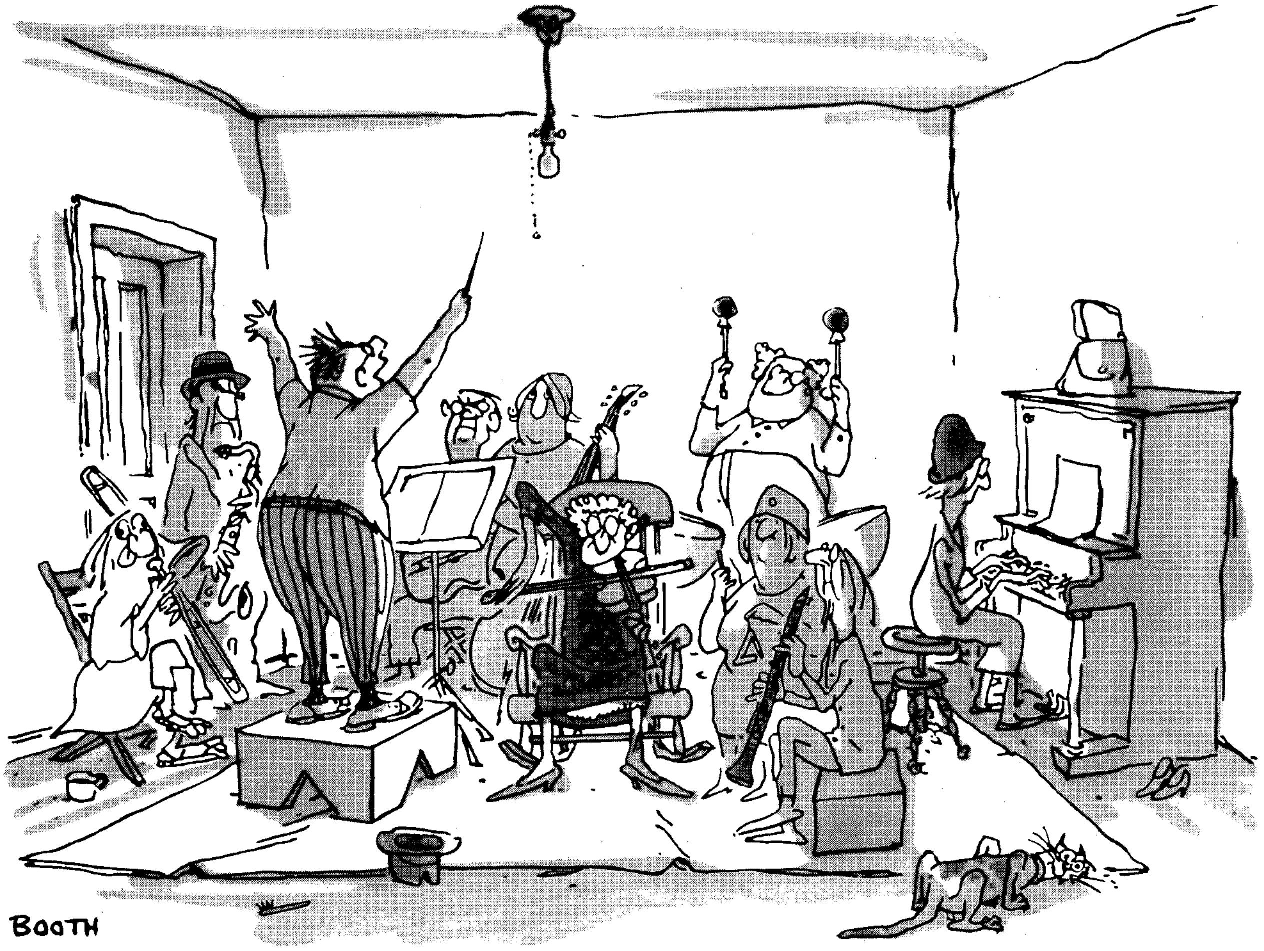
PHOTOGRAPH BY MAX VADUKUL

mother, who wasn't told what my father's middle initial stood for until after they were married, put a stop to the madness: my brother (John), my sister (Anne), and I were named non-agriculturally.

Among Booth's Missouri kin are men named Aut, Elbert, Heck, Orie, and Orman. "Elbert was usually called Tot, or sometimes La-Ta, for some reason," Booth says. "I'm not sure I was closely related to Heck Booth, but I used to see him in town. Aut and Orie were great-uncles of mine. Their full names were Aut Orie and Orie Aut. When they died, in their nineties, my Uncle Ray told me he had once asked their father, whose first name was Jefferson, why he had named the two boys like that, and Jefferson said, 'So I don't get them mixed up.'" Booth's father was called Earl; his mother's name, before she married, was Irma Norene Swindle. They both hated their names and adopted new ones shortly after they started dating. "My mother called my father Billy," Booth says, "and he called her Bill. He'd be looking for her and stick his head around the corner and holler 'Bill!' It seemed natural to me—I didn't think anything about it." Booth has an older brother named Gaylord and a younger brother named James. George called James Jiddy and Gaylord Gillerd; they called him George.

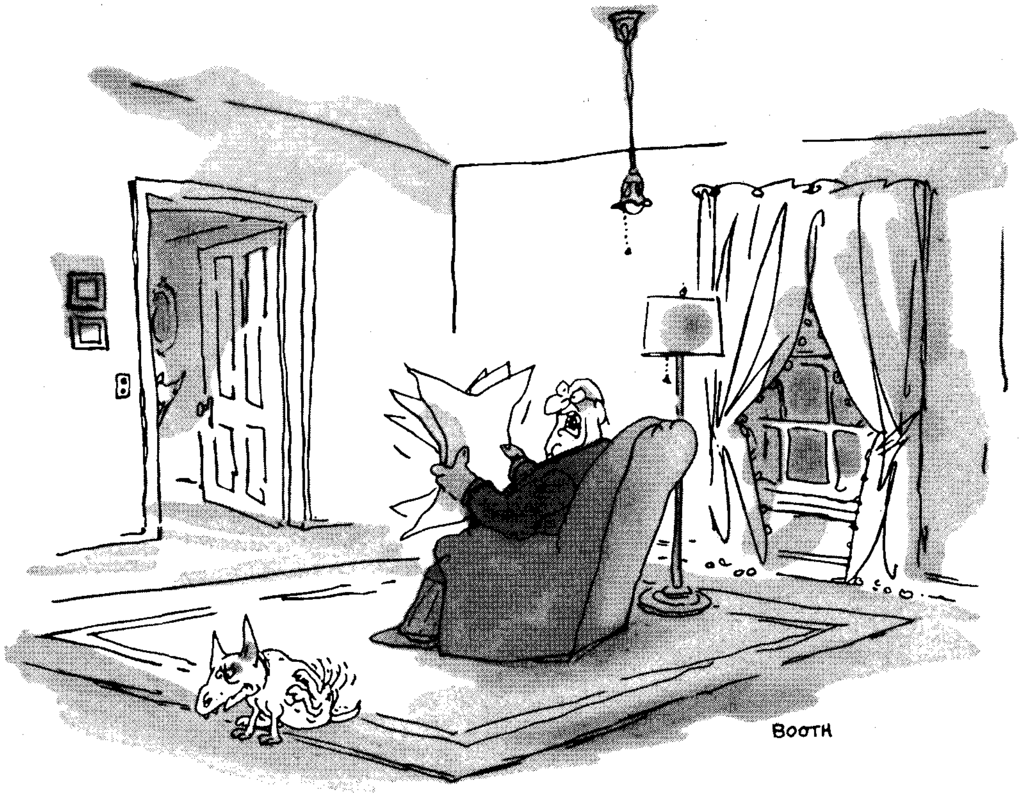
Booth was born in the kitchen of his grandparents' farmhouse, in Cainsville—a town so small that you pretty much have to know already where it is in order to find it on a map. His character, sense of humor, and view of life can probably be traced to some point in that vicinity. He and his wife have lived in Stony Brook, Long Island, for about thirty years—and he has hung around big cities for fifty—but rural Missouri is still as much a part of him as his skeleton is, and it has always provided the emotional framework for his cartoons. He speaks of washing his teeth, not brushing them. He calls an outhouse a toilet, because the only toilets his family had while he was growing up were outhouses. He has no discernible vices. He is "six foot three and shrinking," he says, and his hands are as big as a farmer's hands. His standard work outfit consists of a flannel shirt, bluejeans, and sneakers, and he has slightly messed-up gray hair. He is reserved, placid, self-contained, frugal, reflective, and content—just like all Missourians.

When he was scarcely old enough to hold a pencil, at the age of three, Booth drew his first cartoon. It depicted a Model T racing car stuck in the mud—early evidence of a deep and continuing fascination with debilitated cars. (In the large Booth drawing on pages 134 and 135, the old Volkswagen Beetle with a tall warning light attached to the top is a car that Booth and his wife once actually owned and drove.) "That cartoon I drew when I was three made me laugh," Booth says today. "I showed it to my mother, and she was fascinated by the fact that I thought it was funny. In all the years since then, I've never wanted to do anything else." Booth's mother quietly encouraged his interest; she had had



"From the top—'Watermelon Man.' Let's sock it out and give Mrs. Ritterhouse a chance to really cook!"

a brother, named Gaylord, who loved to draw cartoons but died of tuberculosis at twenty-two, and she was secretly thrilled that a child of hers might someday fulfill her brother's old ambition. But George needed no encouragement: he drew all the time.



"I'd just like to know what in hell is happening, that's all! I'd like to know what in hell is happening! Do you know what in hell is happening?"

• •

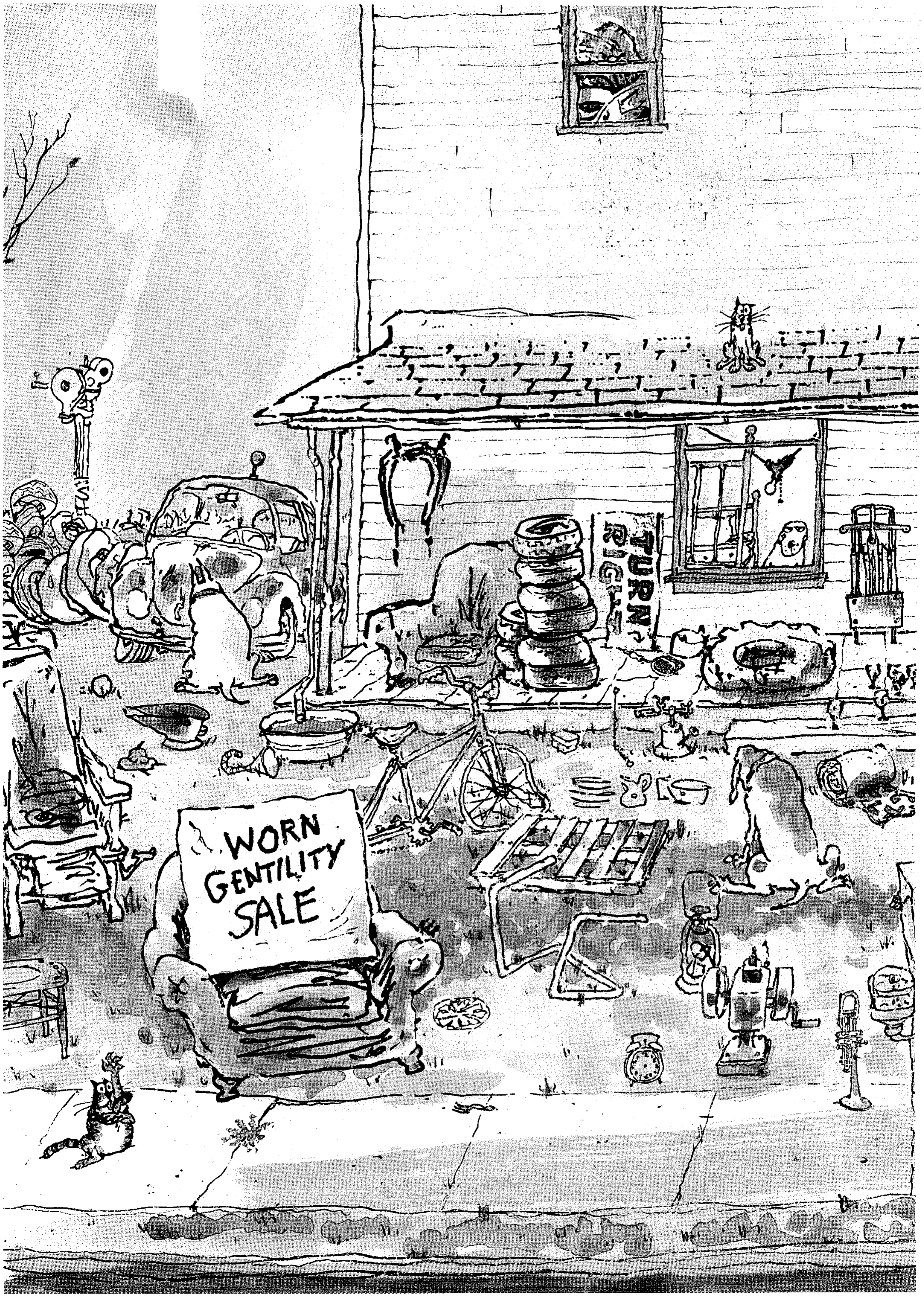
His parents were both teachers in small schools. Life for the family was sometimes hard, especially during the thirties. "At one point," Booth says, "the school board couldn't pay my dad's wages, so they supplied a house for us to live in, and it was my favorite house in all my growing-up. It was a one-room schoolhouse with a bedroom built onto it. There was a little two-by-four kitchen, and my mother had her kerosene stove in there, and also a pump and an iron sink and a little cabinet for the dishes. The schoolroom was the main room, and it had eight or ten windows and was just beautiful. We all slept in the bedroom—the folks in their bed with Jim, who was little. Gaylord and I slept together, and we went to bed before the folks did. When the lights were out, he would take one finger and slowly move it toward my shoulder, and I would scream bloody murder, and the door would fly open and mother would say 'What in the world is going on in there?' and I would say 'Gaylord touched me!' So she'd tell us to cut it out, and she'd close the door and go back in the other room. And then, of course, I'd know it was coming again."

Booth's parents were unusual for their place and time in that both had been to college. His father—who, in addition to teaching, worked as a school administrator and a coach—earned a master's degree at the University of Missouri, and his mother attended nearby Stephens College, a private school for women. (They met in a dining-hall kitchen at Stephens, where Earl was working as a dishwasher.) Both were funny and fiercely self-reliant—traits that George inherited. "My father didn't need help from anyone," he says. "My brother Jim was there with him at the end of his life, and when Dad was about to go, Jim came in to where Dad was lying and took hold of his hand. In as strong and clear a voice as Jim had ever heard, Dad said, 'Let go of my hand.'" During the summer of 1944, while George was waiting to turn eighteen, so that he could enlist, he and his father worked on a construction crew at an airbase in Nebraska. One day, the head of the crew, who was a tyrant, loudly demanded a hammer from George. George didn't have a hammer but was too terrified to respond, and the foreman railed at him unmercifully. George's father, observing the situation from a distance, tossed his own hammer onto the ground at the foreman's feet and said, "Pete, the boy is stone deaf—can't hear a thing you say."

Booth's mother had a similar sense of humor. In 1974, a reporter for the *Times* wrote a story about Booth, and the editor wanted to illustrate it with a photograph of Booth's mother, who was mentioned several times in the interview. "In the only recent picture I had," Booth recalls, "she was standing in the back yard on her farm with a big stick in her hand, like Moses, and she was wearing an old, frayed straw hat and a great big old field jacket, and she was laughing with her mouth wide open. She had just two teeth left at that point—one up and one down—and she used to chew a clothespin to strengthen them." The editor felt that the picture was too undignified for the nation's newspaper of record, and, at considerable expense, he dispatched a photographer to Cainsville to take another. In the new photograph, which was rushed to New York, Booth's mother was standing in the back yard on her farm with a big stick in her hand, like Moses, and she was wearing an old, frayed straw hat and a great big old field jacket, and she was laughing with her mouth wide open: George had called ahead to tell her why the first picture had been rejected. The *Times* decided that it didn't need her picture after all.

She died in 1989, but still makes appearances in his cartoons. She almost always takes the form of Mrs. Ritterhouse, who looks a little like Granny Clampett. (She is the woman looking out of the second-floor window

GEORGE BOOTH, 1/12/76; 1/14/74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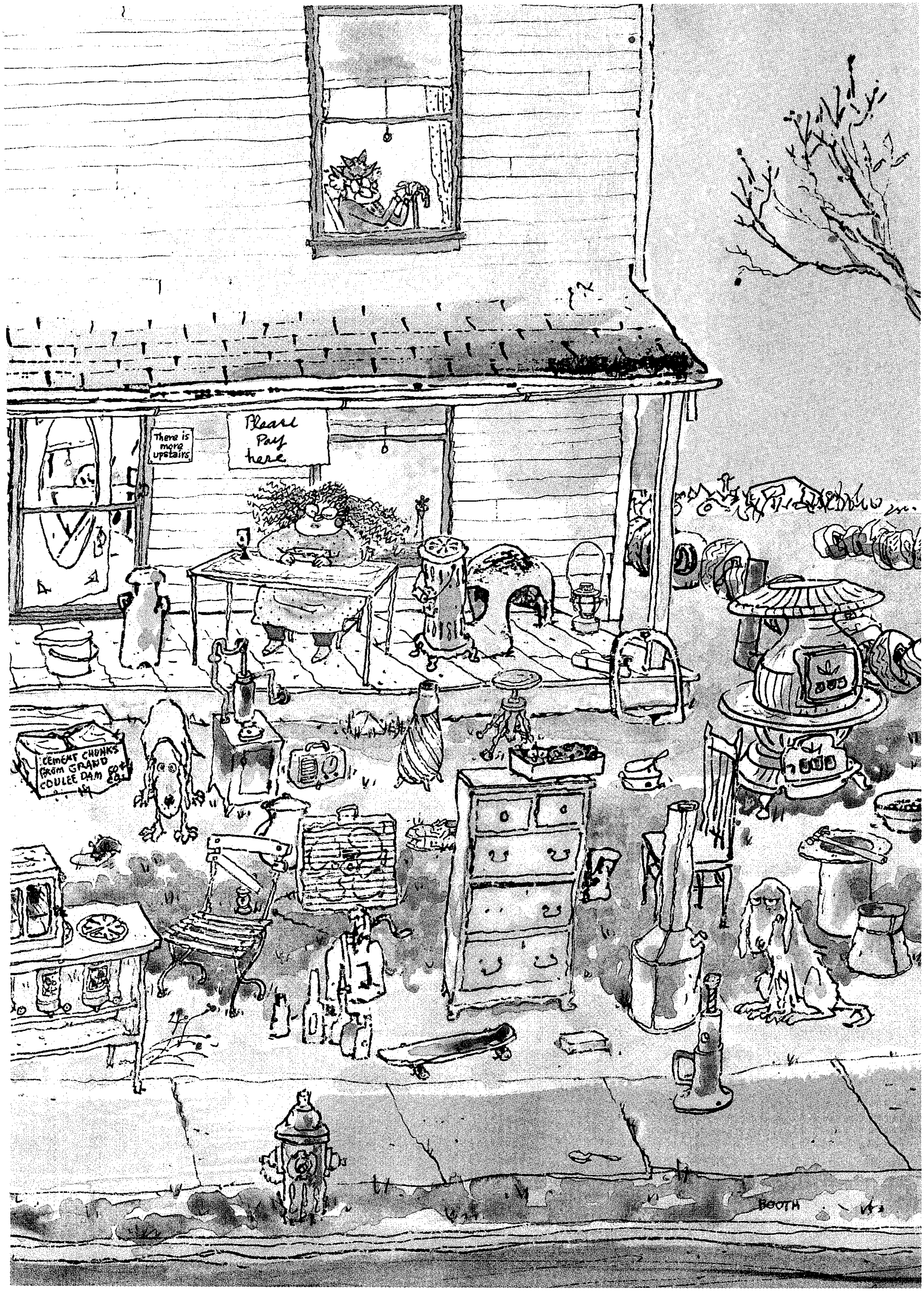
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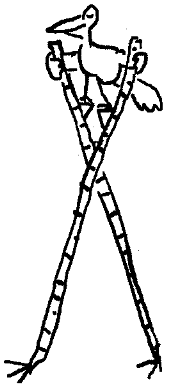
BOOTH

on page 135.) Mrs. Ritterhouse plays the fiddle and is the featured performer in a boisterous living-room ensemble. In one of Booth's best-known cartoons, Mrs. Ritterhouse's chair in the ensemble is empty, and the group's director is announcing, "Rehearsal's off! Our first violinist was apprehended early this morning poaching clams in Great South Bay! The authorities have confiscated her rake and long tongs!" Like many of Booth's cartoons, this one might be considered atmospherically autobiographical: the details are snipped from various parts of his life—the absent first violinist is his mother, the clamming tongs pure Long Island—but he has mixed them up and turned them into something different. And also, of course, made them funny.



GEORGE BOOTH, 1/15/79

IN 1942, when George was sixteen, his father persuaded him to take an after-school job as a printer's devil, so that he would have a trade to fall back on if cartooning didn't pan out right away. For two years, George spent about forty hours a week running a Linotype machine and drawing illustrations for two newspapers, and he worked so late into the night that he sometimes didn't bother to stop off at home before going to school the next day. He taught himself to sleep sitting up at his school desk with his eyes open, so that he could catch up on his rest without attracting too much notice from his teachers. His most restful class was agriculture, which was required by the school board—virtually all the students in the district were going to become farmers—but was of no interest to him.

"We had projects in agriculture class, and one of mine was raising fifty leghorn chickens," he recalls. "They were lovely young white leghorns, but then one of them got a little red spot on her, and another started pecking at the spot, and the first thing I knew they were all pecking holes in each other. They were bleeding, so I wrote to the Missouri Department of Agriculture for advice, and they said to put red goggles on all the chickens, so that everything they'd see would be red, and they'd stop pecking." Booth laughs. "Well, it hardly seemed worth it. Anyway, my conclusion was that inside the head of a chicken there's a little strand that goes from one eyeball to the other, and in the middle of the strand there's a little swollen place, and that's their brain." Chickens later became a recurring motif in Booth's work, and he prides himself on his ability to depict their behavioral abnormalities with minute precision.

When Booth was fifteen, he and his brothers paid ten dollars for a decrepit Ford Model T sedan and drove it almost continuously on the back roads. The car gradually lost most of its pep, so one day the boys parked it under a tree, removed some bolts, ran a rope through the windows and over a branch, hoisted the body into the air, and drove the chassis out from underneath. "That lightened it considerably," Booth says, "and we got some more mileage out of it after that." Gasoline had just begun to be rationed, so the boys had to improvise. "We'd get it started on gasoline and let the engine get good and hot, then switch to kerosene. Gaylord would drive, sitting on the fuel tank, and Jim and I would hang onto the back. Kids are missing out today, you know it? I can still draw old cars from memory—in detail—and I use them in my cartoons."

One of Booth's favorite car-related settings for cartoons is a dark, dog-infested garage in which a team of genially incompetent mechanics invariably fail to repair the vehicles entrusted to them. In one of those cartoons, the head mechanic, with his hands resting on his large belly, says to his customer, "If I were a surgeon, Mr. Ferguson, which I ain't, and your car was my patient, which it ain't—except that it is, in a funny sort of way; that is, if you want to look at it like that; you know what I mean—and you was her husband, I'd have to say, 'Sir, your wife is going to need a valve job.' "

In different cartoons, the garage has been labelled Car Care Center, Don Theis Garage, Five Vets Garage, Booth Radcliff & Ames, and Al's Auto Lubrication & Tune-Up, and Ferguson or someone like him has also been called Watkins, Bates, Henderson, Lundquist, Whittington, and Hendricks. The geography, too, is indeterminate: the setting could be Long Island (where Booth once frequented a similar garage) or rural Missouri, or lower Manhattan (where he once kept the Volkswagen with the warning light) or even suburban Connecticut. But it doesn't need to be pinpointed. The ultimate source of the garage, like the ultimate source of many other elements of Booth's cartoons, lies at some continually shifting point between his present and his past.

BOOTH enlisted in the United States Marine Corps during the summer of 1944. The war ended shortly after he completed his training, and he ended up not fighting in the Pacific but drawing cartoons about military life for the Marine publication *Leatherneck*. "It was a global magazine, and a very good one," he says today. "It was slick. It gave me my start, and I got to work with some top professionals. It was really better than any school I could have gone to, and I learned a lot." He stayed in the U.S. Marine Corps until 1948, when he moved to Chicago and, with the help of the G.I. Bill, took classes in cartooning at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. He also submitted his work to various magazines, with little success; to pay the bills, he got a job illustrating clothing catalogues. Late one night in a dark building in a bad neighborhood in Chicago, he got fed up with what he was supposed to be doing—realistically depicting underpants—and placed his employer's products on a goofy-looking man and dog. "The latest in men's and dogs' long underwear," he wrote beneath the picture—and was almost fired.

He was recalled into the Marine Corps for two years during the Korean War, then moved to New York, where he resumed his long assault on the nation's leading magazines. The ultimate object of his ambition was publication in *The New Yorker*.

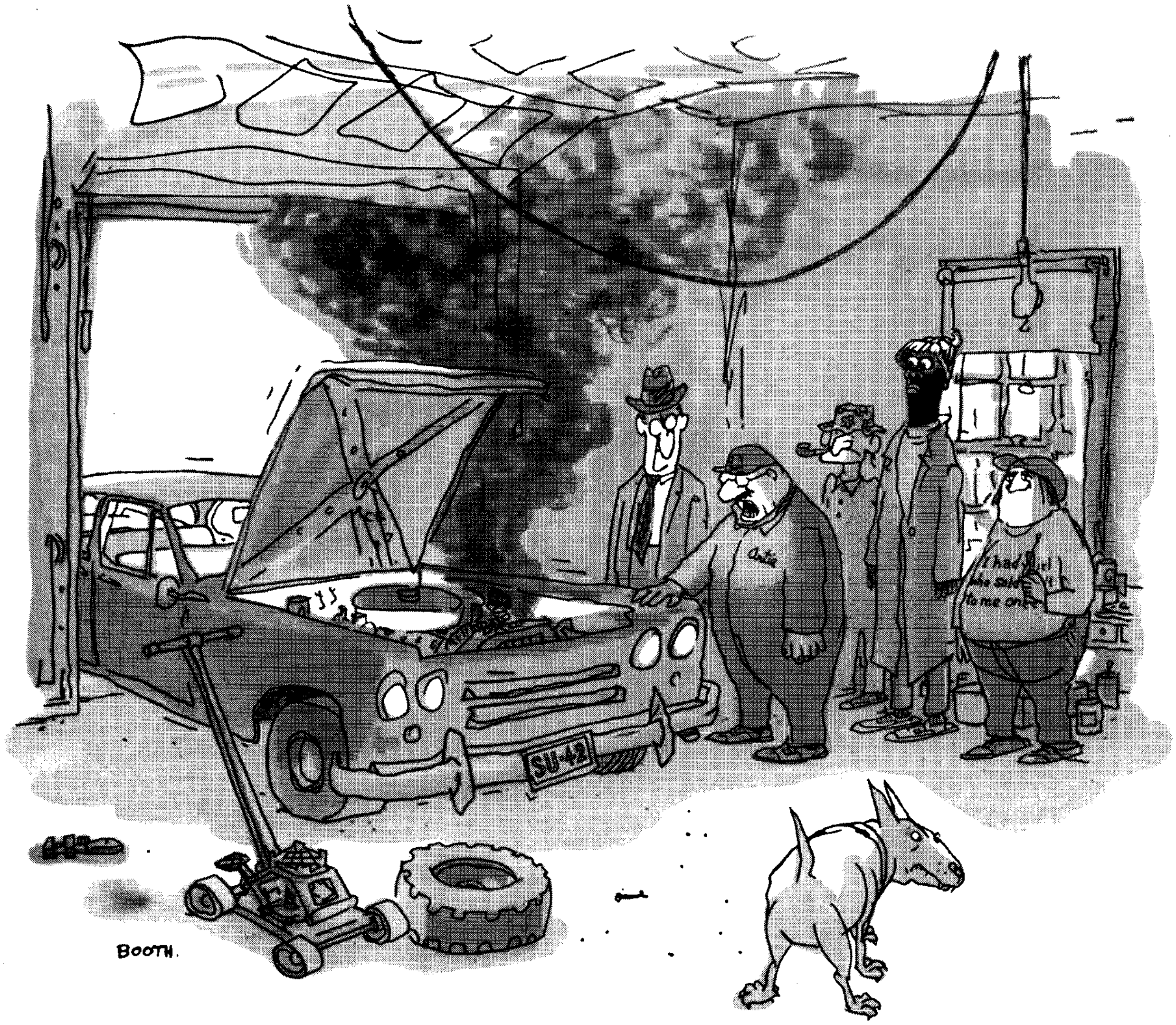
I vividly remember *New Yorker* cartoons from the years when Booth was trying to get through the door. Technically speaking, I wasn't alive during all of that period, but as a lackadaisical youth during the mid-sixties I spent many pleasant hours flipping back and forth through "The New Yorker Twenty-fifth Anniversary Album"—which my parents had received as a wedding present shortly after it was published, in 1951. This volume had more in common with comic books than most of the others in our house did, so I was irresistibly attracted to it. I misconstrued virtually all the jokes, but the pictures hugely affected my conception of the vanished black-and-white world in which I vaguely imagined that my mother and father must have lived before they had me—a world of night clubs, department stores, desert islands, bars, safaris, military bases, showgirls, boxers, bankers, and old garden-club ladies who looked just like my grandmother.

In his early submissions to *The New Yorker*, Booth tried to remake his art in the image of that same world, drawing wealthy people exchanging witty remarks in opulent surroundings. He also allowed his drawing style to be influenced by the painterly compositions of Charles Addams and Peter Arno.

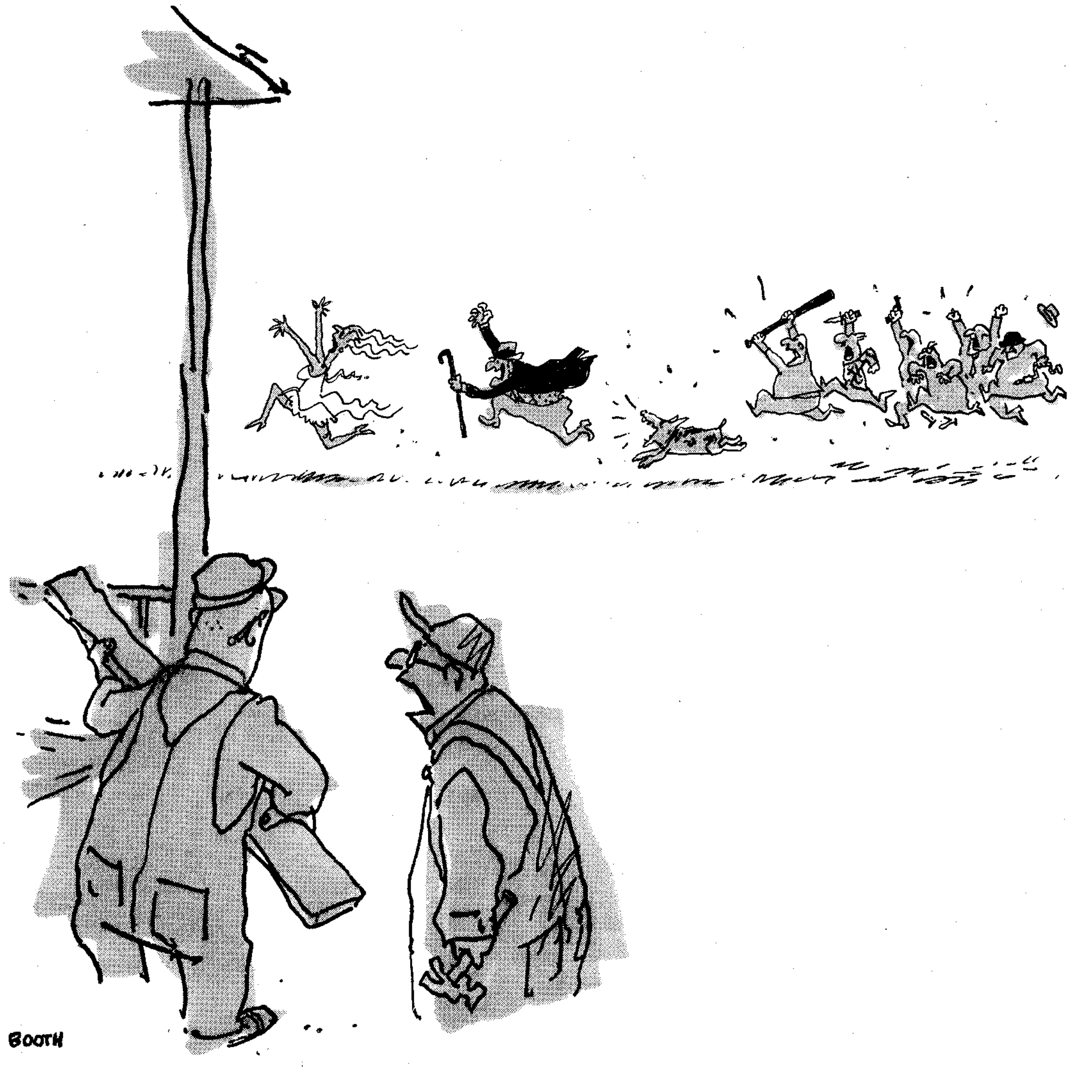
It didn't work. "Finally," Booth says, "I realized that the stuff I was submitting wasn't even funny to me—it didn't make me laugh. I was trying to be somebody I wasn't. But then I would write a letter to someone at home in Missouri, and I would draw some dumb thing on the envelope, and that would make me cackle—maybe it was a chicken with a bad attitude, from my agriculture years, or a horse like the one I used to plow behind—and I finally understood that I wasn't going to make anyone laugh if I couldn't make myself laugh first." He began drawing to please himself, and not long afterward *The New Yorker* began to say yes.

Actually, the very first cartoon of Booth's to be published in this magazine—it appeared in June, 1969—wouldn't have seemed completely out of place forty years earlier: it depicted a slouching old-timer in the reading room of a stuffy men's club, with a Martini at his side, saying, "Ferguson, do you have days when you don't feel a cut above the rest?" But most of the others were closer to his heart, and as his confidence grew he extended his creative terrain further. One of his most appealing inventions was a man taking a bath on the far side of an open doorway at the back of a kitchen in which the man's wife is bent over an ironing board. "How about supper in the tub tonight, Hon?" he hollers over his shoulder. The scene, for Booth, evokes long-vanished days in Missouri when the Booth family bathed in a galvanized washtub in their own small kitchen.

THE joy that Booth takes in drawing funny pictures is undiminished after close to seventy years. "I tend to work all the time," he said in an interview for "The Essential George Booth," a collection and biographical study, written and edited by Lee Lorenz, which is soon to be published by Workman. "I'm never happier than when I'm



"That metallic grinding means her throwout bearings are shot. She's backfiring through her carburetor. The tick indicates transmission trouble, and the smoke means she's on fire."



"Rhino-horn powder works for Pederman with no side effects, except the husbands."

cartooning, and the more I accomplish, the better." During most hours of the day and many hours of the night, he can be found in his studio, which occupies the rear half of a long, low, rectangular building in Stony Brook that used to house someone's plumbing business. The studio comprises a large central workspace, a small kitchen, a bathroom, a couple of good-sized storage closets, and a vertiginous sleeping loft at the top of a ladder. On nights when he is deeply involved in a drawing project, he will sometimes simply climb to the loft and go to bed there.

Booth's imagination outgrew his cranium many years ago, and he has been forced to store most of his subsequent ideas in large, teetering piles scattered throughout the studio. Some of the piles are on the floor. Some are on tables. Some are in laundry baskets. Some are spilling out of three open attaché cases, which by this point probably ought to be considered furniture. The piles contain drawings, sketches, clippings, books, a proposal of marriage ("I know you're no spring chicken, by your shaky line"), unidentifiable snippets, discards, fan letters, envelopes covered with obscure handwritten lists, a news report headed "Top Dog-Biting Cities," half-finished cartoons, various familiar Booth characters photocopied at different magnifications, a drawing of a cat clipped from one cartoon and taped to another, receipts, advertisements, mislaid bills, and a letter from an aspiring cartoonist, which begins, "Currently freelancing in the Baltimore-Washington area, I would enjoy discussing the possibility of putting my drawing and conceptualizing abilities to work for you."

Booth says, "It's an impossible amount of stuff, I know, but I'll start going through it and get tickled at something, and then, if I'm lucky, I'll work a gag out of it." Sometimes he finds his inspiration not in images but in unusual words or phrases. He owns an ancient Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, which his father gave him, and an equally ancient Roget's Thesaurus, and he likes to bounce interesting terms back and forth between them, hoping that serendipity will lead him to the mot juste. Recently, for example, while he was wrestling with the caption for a cartoon involving a downtown book signing, he began with "party" and ended up with "fizgig"—a type of firework that fizzes or hisses when it explodes, and a word that may be derived from a Middle English verb meaning "to break wind." Finding a word like that, Booth says, is "as exciting as drawing."

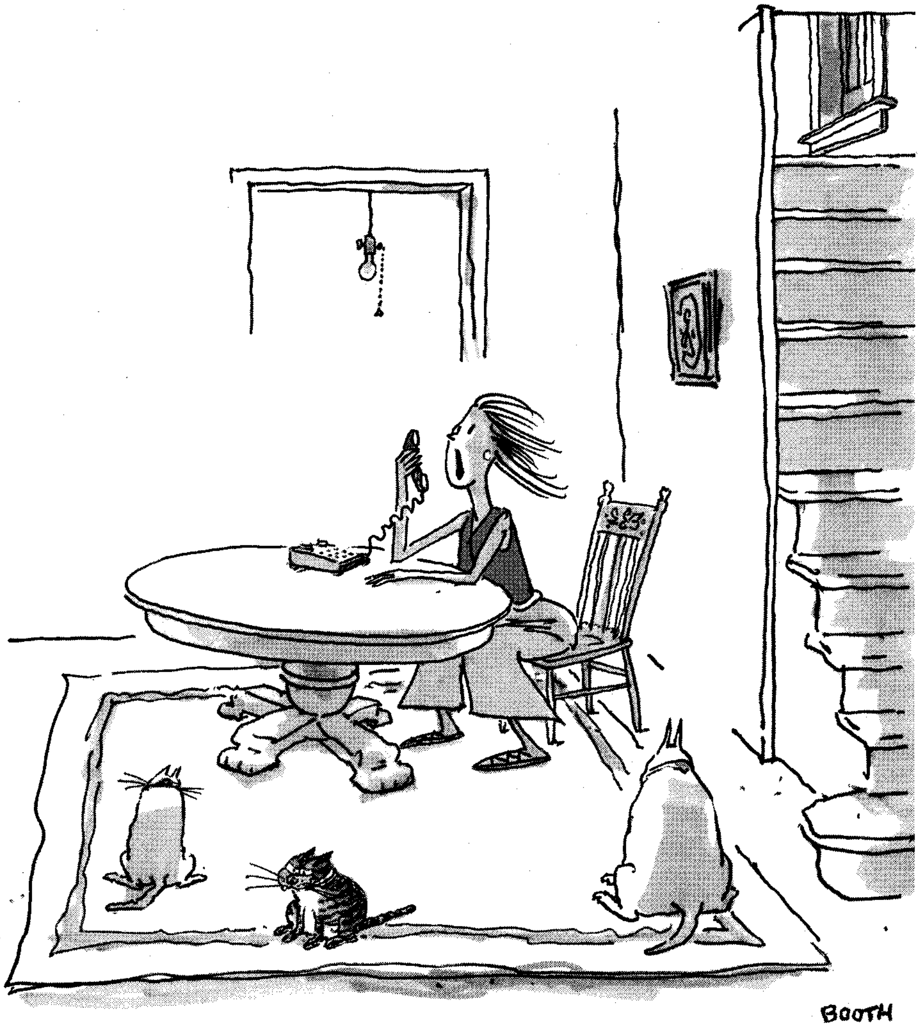
His drawing board stands in the farthest corner from the loft. The parts of it that are not in active use at any particular moment are usually buried several layers deep in drawings, papers, correspondence, and miscellaneous items. Built up along the bottom edge of the board are numerous irregular accretions of Scotch tape; Booth uses them as ledges to keep papers, pens, and scissors from sliding to the floor. Often lying in his chair is a large, somnolent gray-and-white cat, which, if it is approached cautiously, doesn't mind being scooped up and moved somewhere else. Booth had no particular regard for cats until he met his wife, but he now loves them, and he shares both his studio and his home with several. He and Dione have never owned a dog—a fact that may surprise those of Booth's fans who consider him the world's leading authority on deviant canine behavior. "Dogs are kind of like trees to me," he says dismissively. "I enjoy them, but I'd just as soon not do all the chores."

Hanging on the wall beside a telephone near Booth's chair are several small pictures, among them a photograph of Laurel and Hardy, whose movies he loves. He also loves the movies of Buster Keaton and the Marx Brothers. If you study his cartoons in any sizable sampling, you can readily detect a deep undercurrent of slapstick. In fact, when Booth talks about his drawings he sometimes sounds as though he were describing film clips rather than static pieces of line art. Here, for example, is his summary of a single-panel cartoon that he sold to this magazine last year: "It's a guillotine cartoon, and the guy is up there standing on the platform, looking at you as though he's totally disgusted with the whole world, because he's about to lose his head, and one of the guards starts to blow a bugle. There's a hog house on a rise behind the guillotine, and this old hungry sow hears the bugle, and the door of the hog house flops open, and out she comes, running down to get her dinner."

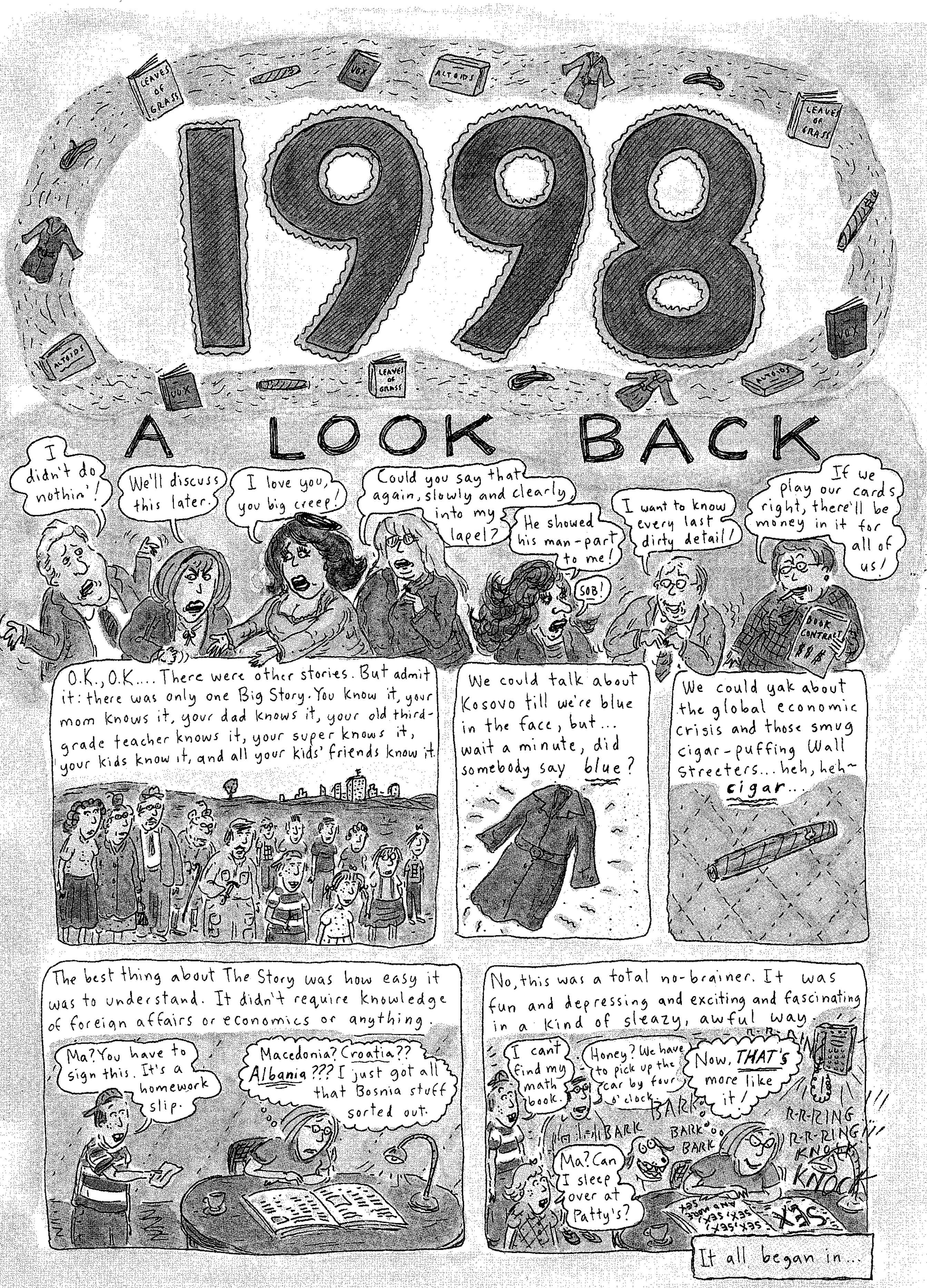
Among Booth's favorite projects over the years is a calendar he illustrated, in 1982, for a small greeting-card company. Each page of the calendar provided instructions (written by Jimmy Fitzgerald) for an improbable exercise. The exercise for April: "Set up a stepladder in the front parlor and remove all footwear. Take turns balancing an eight quart cast iron bean pot on your head. Then, without using your hands, walk backwards up the stepladder and down again. Exercise should be done to a loop tape of 'Beautiful Dreamer.' " The remarkable—and entirely characteristic—fact about Booth's illustration is that the visual narrative is so clear as to make the written directions almost superfluous.

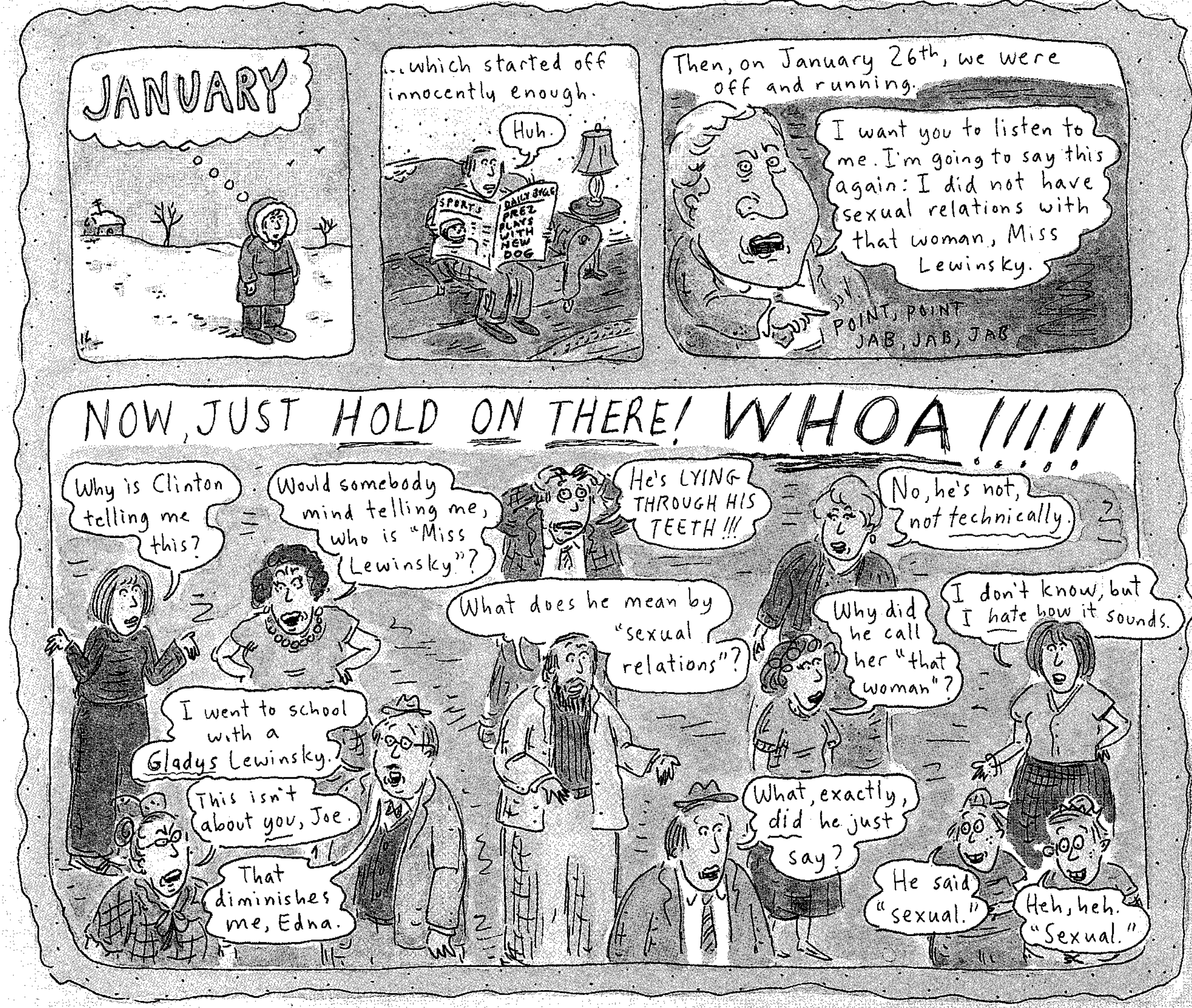
IN the nineteen-seventies, a newspaper reporter who was interviewing the cartoonist in his back yard asked Booth what he did for a hobby. He didn't know how to answer, because his vocation has always been his avocation as well. Looking down at his feet, though, he noticed an old sewing-machine flywheel sticking partly out of the ground, and he said, "I collect iron wheels." When the story was published, a few of the newspaper's readers sent him iron wheels, as did various relatives, neighbors, and friends. Sometimes he would open the door of his house or his studio and find an iron wheel lying on the step. "I like the big, wide flywheels better than the narrow ones," he says today. As his collection grew, he hung some of his wheels on the garden fence next to his studio, painted some, and put others in his house. His wife became fond of them, too. His younger brother, Jim, once drove from Missouri to Long Island pulling a homemade trailer that contained a huge (and slightly broken) wheel from an old printing press—on which their parents' wedding announcements had been printed, many years before—and gave it to him. "He thought that was funny," Booth says today. "And so do I."

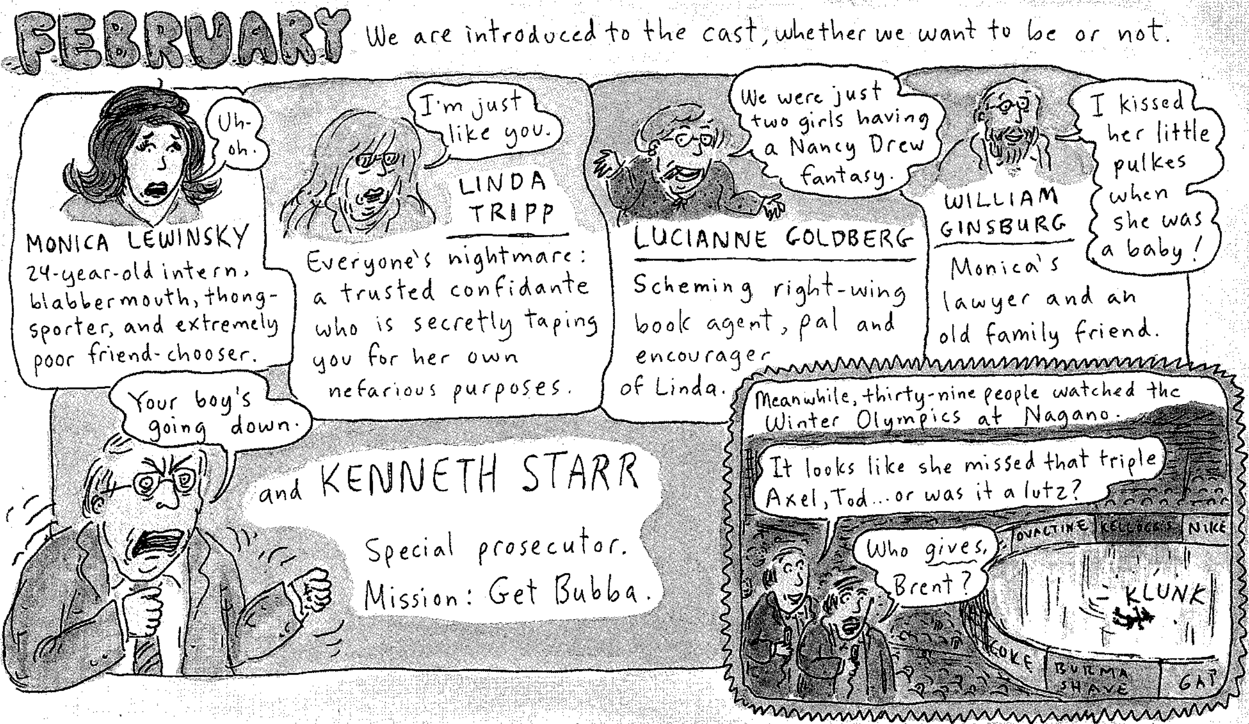
The wheels will never be more than a sideline, though. Cartooning is what consumes him, just as it always has. It is his lifework, in the deepest possible sense of that word. "This is a very serious thought, which is unusual for me," he said one day recently while sitting at his drawing board. "But I see people floundering around in their lives—wanting to do something that they can't do, or not knowing what they want to do, or not having the opportunity to do what they want to do—and I realize how blessed I've been. I have spent my whole life doing the thing I love. One of the demands I've always made on myself is to keep on doing that thing, and not go off in some other direction because of money. But I have something better—freedom of expression. The kind of cartoon that we do at *The New Yorker*—the drawing and caption, or the page, or the cover, or the spread—is pure, wide-open freedom. I try to be careful not to take it for granted. The work I do is the only work I've ever wanted to do. And no matter how long I do it, I always feel like I'm just on the verge of getting started." ♦

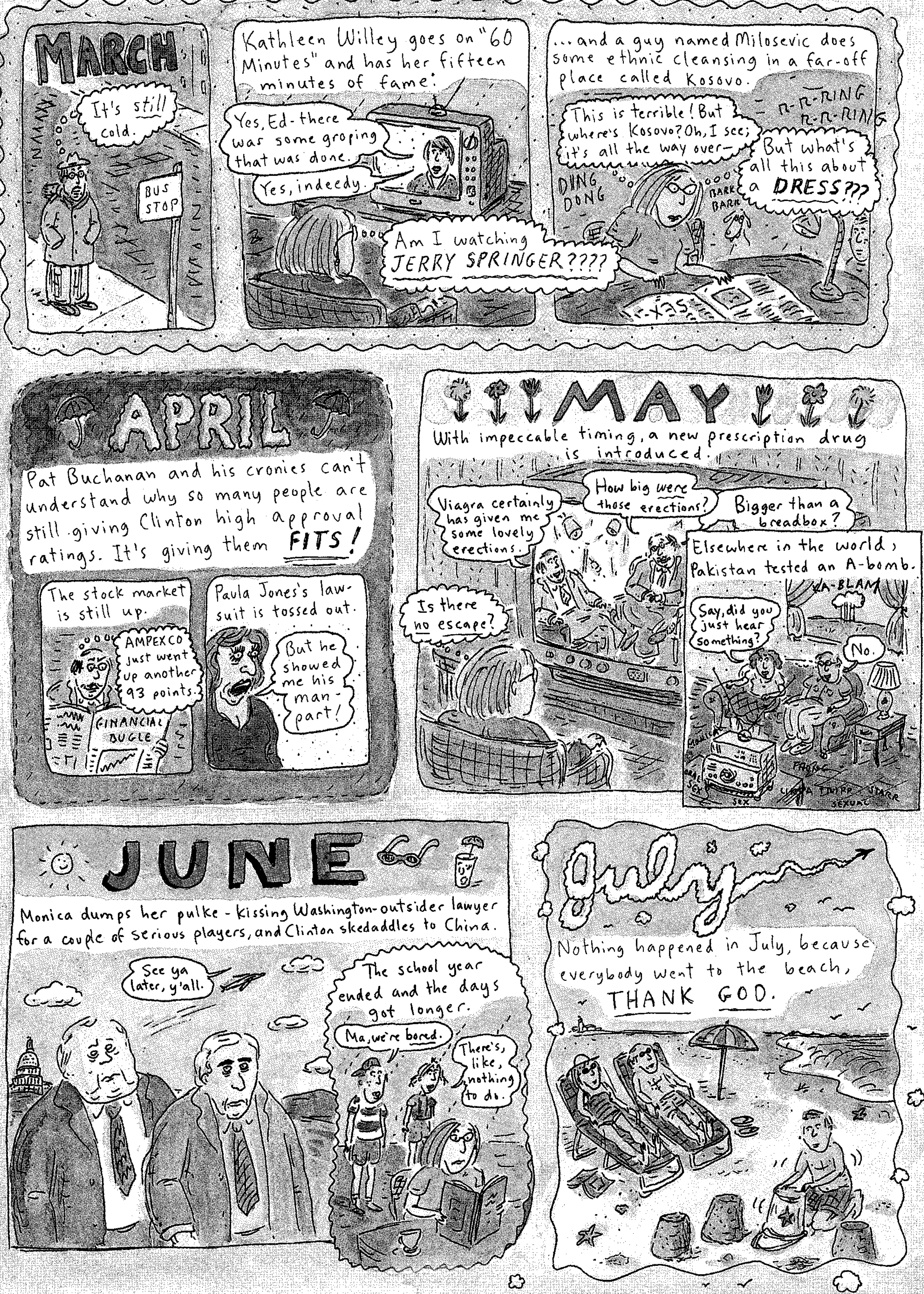


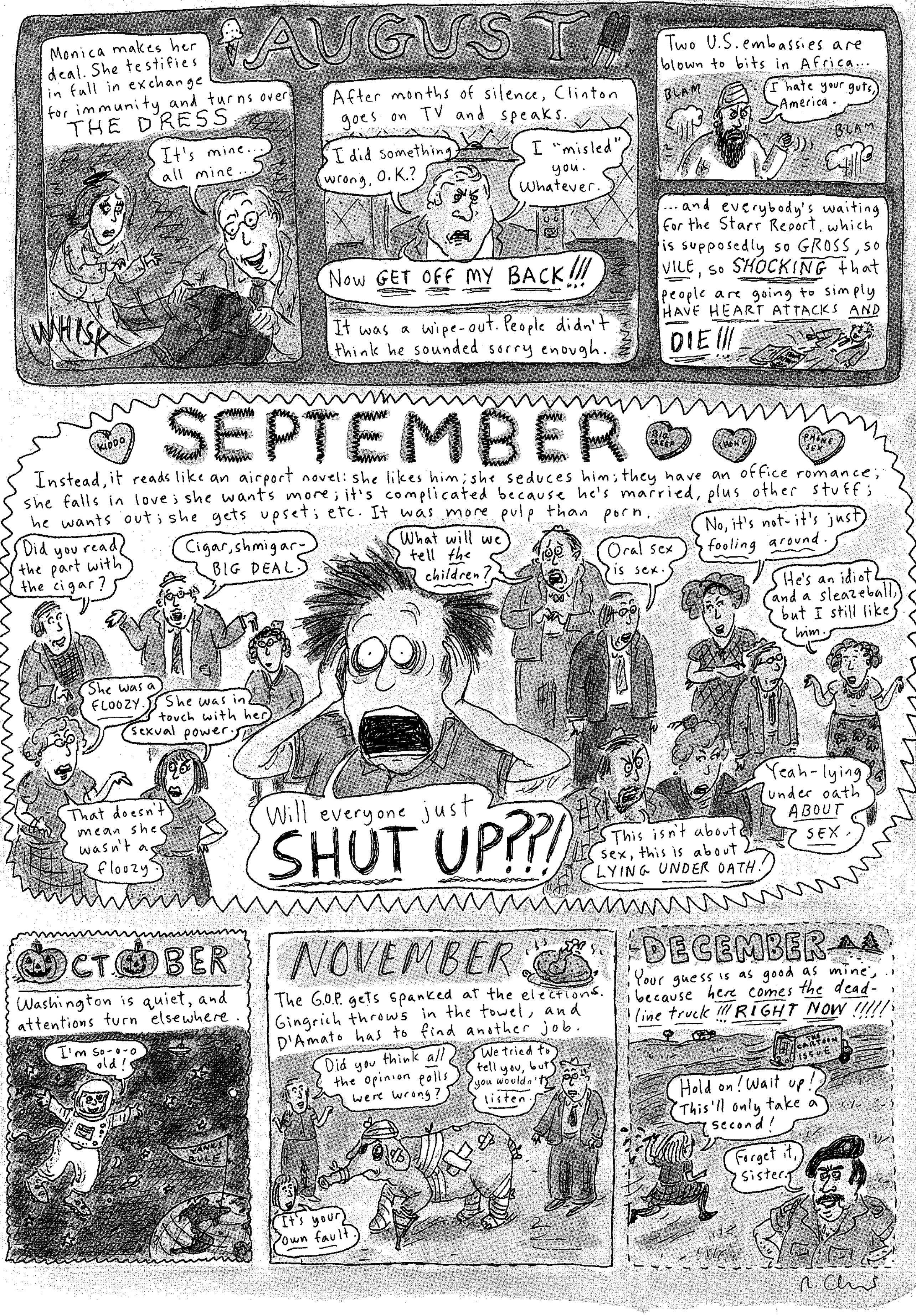
"We already changed our phone service to something or other last week, so we don't need whatever it is you have."


1998
A LOOK BACK
LEAVES OF GRASS
VOX
ALTOIDS
I didn't do nothin'!
We'll discuss this later.
I love you, you big creep!
Could you say that again, slowly and clearly into my lapel?
He showed his man-part to me!
SOB!
I want to know every last dirty detail!
If we play our cards right, there'll be money in it for all of us!
BOOK CONTRACT $$$
O.K., O.K.... There were other stories. But admit it: there was only one Big Story. You know it, your mom knows it, your dad knows it, your old third-grade teacher knows it, your super knows it, your kids know it, and all your kids' friends know it.
We could talk about Kosovo till we're blue in the face, but... wait a minute, did somebody say *blue*?
We could yak about the global economic crisis and those smug cigar-puffing Wall Streeters... heh, heh~ **cigar**...
The best thing about The Story was how easy it was to understand. It didn't require knowledge of foreign affairs or economics or anything.
Ma? You have to sign this. It's a homework slip.
Macedonia? Croatia?? Albania??? I just got all that Bosnia stuff sorted out.
No, this was a total no-brainer. It was fun and depressing and exciting and fascinating in a kind of sleazy, awful way.
I can't find my math book.
Honey? We have to pick up the car by four o'clock.
Now, THAT's more like it!
R-R-RING
BARK
BARK
BARK
BARK
R-R-RING
R-R-RING
KNOCK
KNOCK
Ma? Can I sleep over at Patty's?
SEX
SEX, SEX, SEX, SEX, SEX AND MORE SEX
It all began in...


JANUARY
...which started off innocently enough.
SPORTS
DAILY BUGLE
PREZ PLAYS WITH NEW DOG
Huh.
Then, on January 26th, we were off and running.
I want you to listen to me. I'm going to say this again: I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky.
POINT, POINT
JAB, JAB, JAB
NOW, JUST HOLD ON THERE! WHOA!!!!!
Why is Clinton telling me this?
Would somebody mind telling me, who is "Miss Lewinsky"?
He's LYING THROUGH HIS TEETH!!!
No, he's not, not technically.
What does he mean by "sexual relations"?
Why did he call her "that woman"?
I don't know, but I hate how it sounds.
I went to school with a Gladys Lewinsky.
This isn't about you, Joe.
That diminishes me, Edna.
What, exactly, did he just say?
He said "sexual."
Heh, heh. "Sexual."


FEBRUARY We are introduced to the cast, whether we want to be or not.
Uh-oh.
MONICA LEWINSKY
24-year-old intern, blabbermouth, thong-sporter, and extremely poor friend-chooser.
I'm just like you.
LINDA TRIPP
Everyone's nightmare: a trusted confidante who is secretly taping you for her own nefarious purposes.
We were just two girls having a Nancy Drew fantasy.
LUCIANNE GOLDBERG
Scheming right-wing book agent, pal and encourager of Linda.
I kissed her little pulkes when she was a baby!
WILLIAM GINSBURG
Monica's lawyer and an old family friend.
Your boy's going down.
and KENNETH STARR
Special prosecutor. Mission: Get Bubba.
Meanwhile, thirty-nine people watched the Winter Olympics at Nagano.
It looks like she missed that triple Axel, Tod...or was it a lutz?
Who gives, Brent?
OVALTINE
KELLOGG'S
NIKE
KLUNK
COKE
BURMA SHAVE
GAT


MARCH
It's still cold.
BUS STOP
Kathleen Willey goes on "60 Minutes" and has her fifteen minutes of fame:
Yes, Ed - there was some groping that was done.
Yes, indeedy.
Am I watching JERRY SPRINGER????
...and a guy named Milosevic does some ethnic cleansing in a far-off place called Kosovo.
This is terrible! But where's Kosovo? Oh, I see; it's all the way over—
R-R-RING R-R-RING
But what's all this about a DRESS???
DING DONG
BARK BARK
SEX
APRIL
Pat Buchanan and his cronies can't understand why so many people are still giving Clinton high approval ratings. It's giving them FITS!
The stock market is still up.
AMPEXCO just went up another 93 points.
FINANCIAL BUGLE
Paula Jones's lawsuit is tossed out.
But he showed me his man-part!
MAY
With impeccable timing, a new prescription drug is introduced.
Viagra certainly has given me some lovely erections.
How big were those erections?
Bigger than a breadbox?
Is there no escape?
Elsewhere in the world, Pakistan tested an A-bomb.
KA-BLAM
Say, did you just hear something?
No.
SEX
SEX
LINDA TRIPP
STARR
SEXUAL
JUNE
Monica dumps her pulke-kissing Washington-outsider lawyer for a couple of serious players, and Clinton skedaddles to China.
See ya later, y'all.
The school year ended and the days got longer.
Ma, we're bored.
There's, like, nothing to do.
July
Nothing happened in July, because everybody went to the beach, THANK GOD.


AUGUST
Monica makes her deal. She testifies in full in exchange for immunity and turns over THE DRESS.
It's mine... all mine...
WHISK
After months of silence, Clinton goes on TV and speaks.
I did something wrong, O.K.?
I "misled" you. Whatever.
Now GET OFF MY BACK!!!
It was a wipe-out. People didn't think he sounded sorry enough.
Two U.S. embassies are blown to bits in Africa...
BLAM
I hate your guts, America.
BLAM
...and everybody's waiting for the Starr Report, which is supposedly so GROSS, so VILE, so SHOCKING that people are going to simply HAVE HEART ATTACKS AND DIE!!!
SEPTEMBER
KIDDO
BIG CREEP
THONG
PHONE SEX
Instead, it reads like an airport novel: she likes him; she seduces him; they have an office romance; she falls in love; she wants more; it's complicated because he's married, plus other stuff; he wants out; she gets upset; etc. It was more pulp than porn.
Did you read the part with the cigar?
Cigar, shmigar— BIG DEAL.
What will we tell the children?
Oral sex is sex.
No, it's not—it's just fooling around.
He's an idiot and a sleazeball, but I still like him.
She was a FLOOZY.
She was in touch with her sexual power.
That doesn't mean she wasn't a floozy.
Will everyone just SHUT UP???
This isn't about sex, this is about LYING UNDER OATH!
Yeah—lying under oath ABOUT SEX.
OCTOBER
Washington is quiet, and attentions turn elsewhere.
I'm so-o-o old!
YANKS RULE
NOVEMBER
The G.O.P. gets spanked at the elections. Gingrich throws in the towel, and D'Amato has to find another job.
Did you think all the opinion polls were wrong?
We tried to tell you, but you wouldn't listen.
It's your own fault.
DECEMBER
Your guess is as good as mine, because here comes the deadline truck!!! RIGHT NOW!!!!!
THE CARTOON ISSUE
Hold on! Wait up! This'll only take a second!
Forget it, sister.

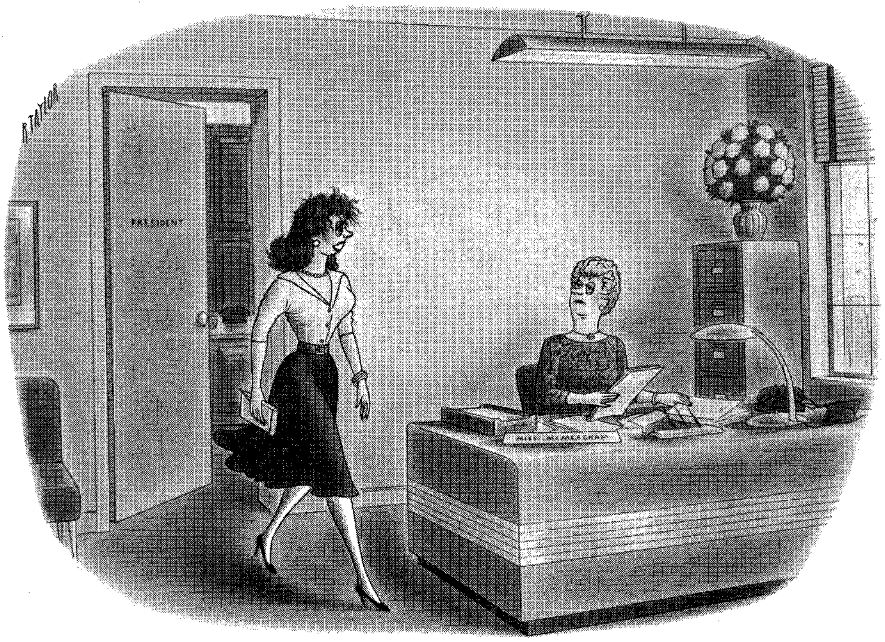
FROM THE ARCHIVES

SEX TO SEXTY

A potted cartoon history of gender politics.

BY HENDRIK HERTZBERG

It hasn't been just a rough year for dirty old men, it's been a rough decade. Remember John Tower—the Texas senator, comically short despite the name and the state? In 1988, he was nominated to be Secretary of Defense, but his former colleagues wouldn't confirm him, because (to summarize the findings of the Federal Bureau of Investigation) he liked to drink Martinis in cocktail lounges with attractive young women. Then came Justice-to-be Clarence Thomas, ex-Senator-to-be Robert Packwood, New York *Post* columnist-to-be Dick Morris, and, closing the decade with a well-documented nonbang, ex-President-to-be (though not quite as soon to be ex as the commentariat predicted) Bill Clinton. And that's just the politicians. The line of chastened Romeos in the "private sector" is at least as long, especially, for some reason, in the growing field of sports announcing—Marv Albert, Frank Gifford.



"Three more months and he reaches mandatory retirement age, thank God!"

Clinton is supposedly the representative figure of a generation—the baby boomers—that, perhaps as a corollary to defining deviancy down, has defined youth up. So it may be objected that, while the onetime defendant in Jones v. Clinton is (as he himself affirms at every prayer breakfast) plenty dirty, he is not really old. If, however, he were to be magically transported into the imaginary world of generic characters created by *The New Yorker's* cartoonists of half a century ago, he would be bald, beady-eyed, stout, probably tuxedoed, and, very likely, extravagantly mustachioed. The fifty-, sixty-, and seventy-year-old skirt chasers who appear in the drawings of such artists as Peter Arno, Richard Taylor, and Whitney Darrow, Jr., look their age. Like our President, though, they don't act it.

From the nineteen-twenties through the early nineteen-sixties, one of the more durable genres of *New Yorker* cartoons was what became known in the Art Department as Sugar Daddies. Most of these cartoons—no, all of them—are about the same thing. They are a form of what we now call situation comedy; each of them is a variation on a single joke. The joke is boy meets girl with a twist; that is to say, old, rich, powerful, and less than hunky but very randy (and almost certainly married) old man meets gorgeous, pneumatic, sexually attractive (and implicitly available) young woman. We often find this couple sitting at a table for two in a night club or a restaurant, with fluted glasses between them and a bottle of champagne in an ice bucket nearby. Each has something the other wants, and negotiations are in progress. The young woman is very much aware of her desirability, though in a rather sweet, naïve way. She's nicely dressed, but you have the impression that once she has stocked up on nylons and cosmetics there's not much disposable income left over. The old man is holding all the cards but one. Still, it's often he who is in the role of supplicant. After all, he has already begun to come across with his end of the deal: they aren't going Dutch, and where do you suppose she got the diamond necklace? But she may still require a bit of persuading, whether gentle ("Where have *you* been all my life?" bald Sugar Daddy asks not-yet-born-for-most-of-his-life Bimbo in a 1950 Whitney Darrow drawing) or forceful (S.D. to B., in a 1961 cartoon by Joe Mirachi: "Look at it this way—you're a woman and I'm a millionaire").

By today's standards, of course, cartoons like these are as politically in-

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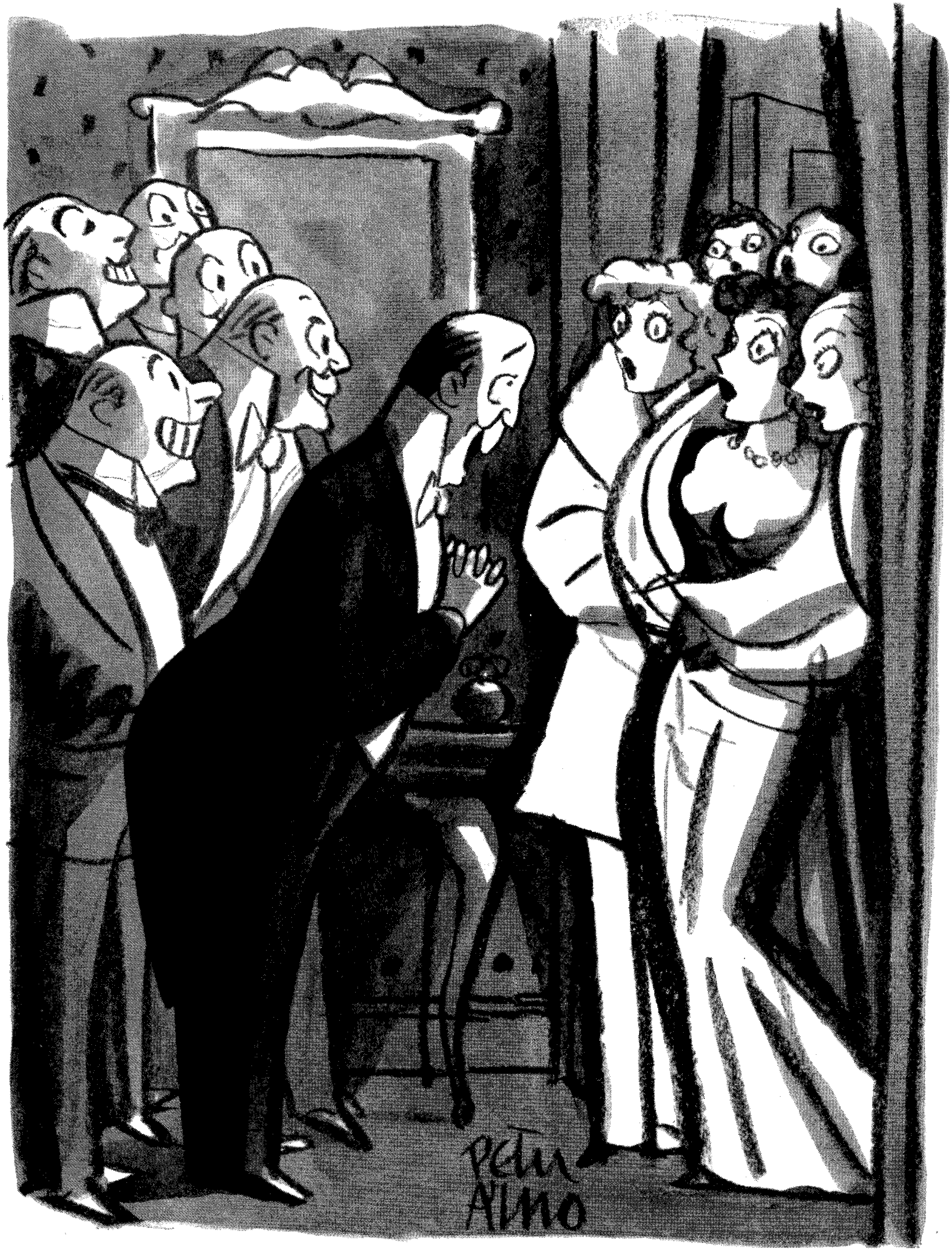
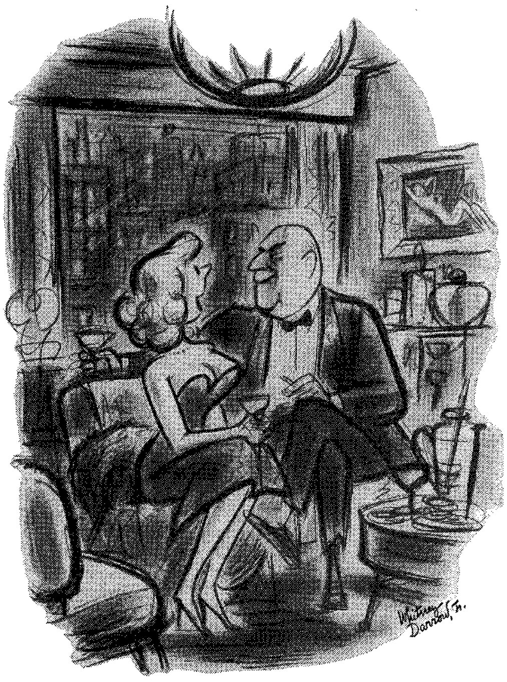
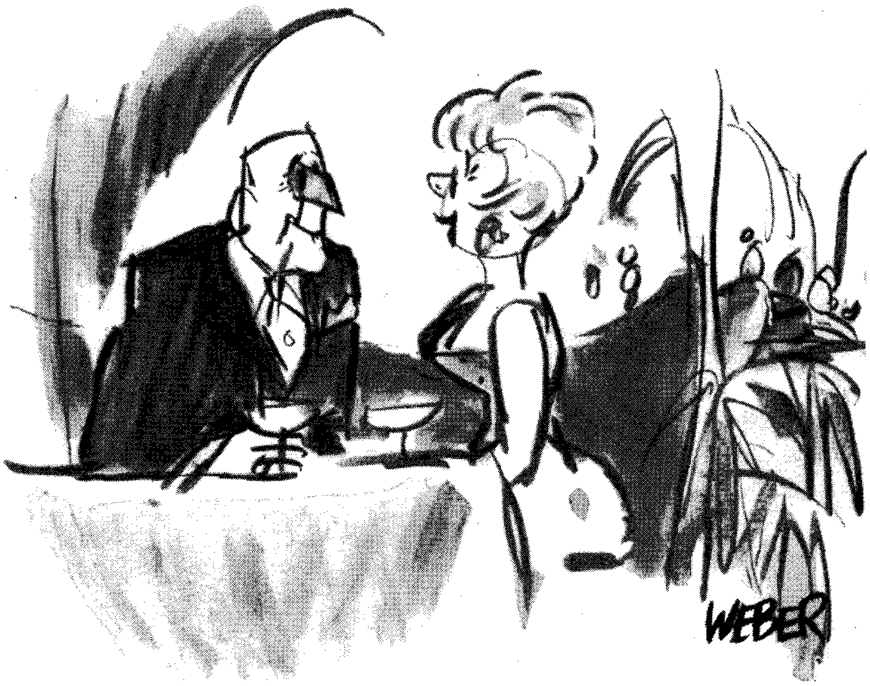


"I suppose you girls are wondering why I asked you here tonight."


Whitney Darrow, Jr.

"Mr. Bates, you mean this Little Theatre group of yours is just you and me?"



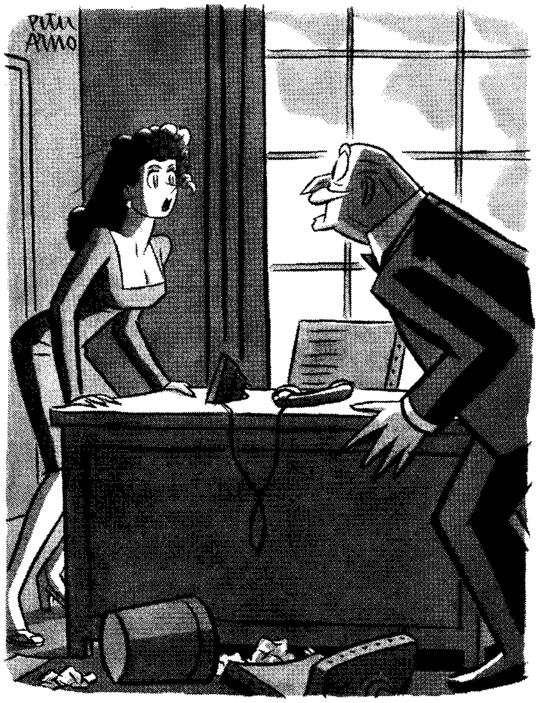
"Gee whizz, Mr. Curtis, a million dollars isn't old!"

correct as a whalemeat sandwich. Some of them (such as Arno's 1936 group grope in the making, reproduced here on page 145) are downright chilling. But, also by today's standards, they add up to a critique of the dynamic that they seem to take as a given. They might even be seen as a pre-feminist indictment of the commodification of sex. The man provides money (or jewels or mink coats or luxurious vacations); the woman provides sex, or so the man hopes. (She is already providing arm-candy prestige.) What's going on in these cartoons is not exactly prostitution—it's something a little less crass and a lot less straightforward than that—but it's close enough to create an awkward, slightly poignant tension, which the joke serves to release.

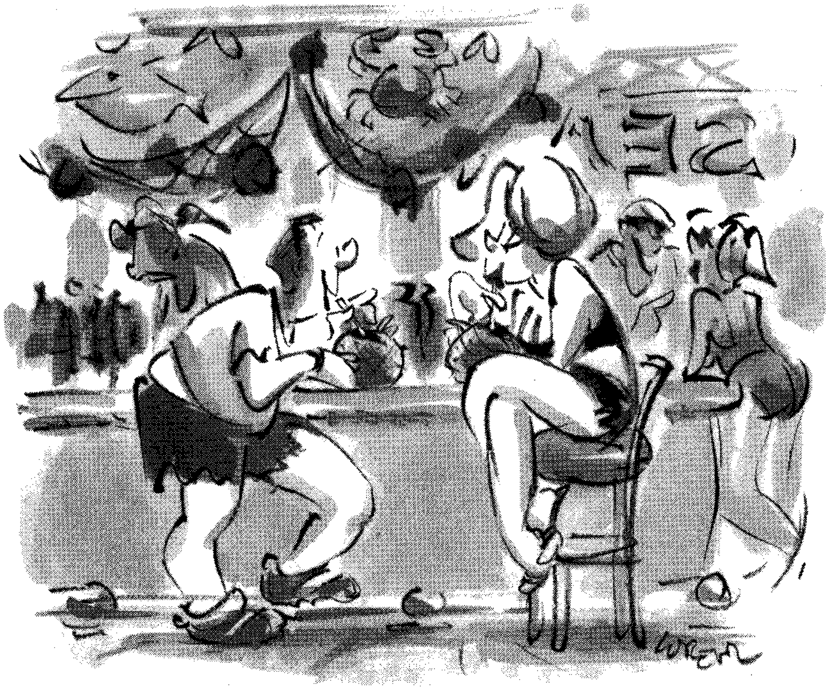
The underlying nature of the transaction is pretty raw—so much so that both parties to it have a strong interest in convincing not just each other but themselves that what's happening isn't really what's happening. Voluptuous mistress to chubby tycoon, in a 1936 William Galbraith boudoir: "Little things mean a lot to a girl, Mr. Goldsmith—like your coming to see me this way when you're cold sober." But it's more often the man who requires reassurance. He may be more powerful, but he's also more vulnerable—if only emotionally, and if only for the moment. He is, after all, old. "Do you know what I like about being with you, Mr. Buskin?" a sweet young thing in a Frank Modell cartoon coos to the middle-aged businessman next to her on the banquette. "You make history come alive for me." In one of Ed Koren's drawings, the sweet young thing tells her aging swain, "For an oldie, you're a goodie." And the young woman in a Bernard Shoenbaum cartoon tries to assure her Sugar Daddy that he really interests her as a person. "Gee, Mr. Wilson," she says earnestly, "you have more money than anyone I've ever met."

A related motif has the Bimbo comforting the Sugar Daddy by assuring him that, gosh, whatever age he might be isn't old. A very recent example, published only a few weeks ago, is set in a Jetsons-style future, as imagined by Lee Lorenz. Robots serve the drinks, the girl has enormous hair and gravity-defying bosoms, and the man looks like a wizened Elvis impersonator who has forgotten to put his teeth in. The caption: "Gee whizz, Mr. Collins—two hundred and six isn't old!" This subgenre is remarkably hardy—so much so that it has managed to survive the publication, way back in 1965, of a great Robert Weber metacartoon (second from left, above) that had the definitive feel of a final summing up.

A cheerier note is struck in a marvellous Jazz Age painting by Julian De Miskey, which was published as the cover of the January 14, 1928, issue of *The New Yorker* and is reproduced herein on page 149. A blonde exchanges a flirtatious glance with a young lounge lizard while her date—a tycoon of unusually ample girth—is momentarily distracted by the waiter, who is either taking an order or adding up the check. De Miskey's picture is a Cole Porter medley in pencil and gouache: the blonde's heart may not belong to Daddy, but, even if (for tonight) her attentions do, she's happy to signal her darling at the neighboring table that she's true to *him*, too, in her fashion. Usually, in these cartoons, as in life, there are "winners"—the flabby but rich old men and the sexy but poor young women. There are "losers," too: poor, or anyway unrich, young men and frumpy, or anyway unbeautiful, middle-aged women. But in De Miskey's picture, everyone's a winner—except, perhaps, the tycoon's wife, who is nowhere to be seen. (Never mind; she has a cartoon universe of her own, courtesy of the great Helen E. Hokinson, whose stout,



"Young woman, do you realize my time is worth thirty dollars a minute?"



"Now, don't go calling the sex police, or anything, but I think you're swell."

respectable, sweet-tempered matrons gardened, shopped, visited galleries and bookshops, and played bridge—hardly ever in the company of men, especially their husbands—in these pages from 1925 until 1950.)

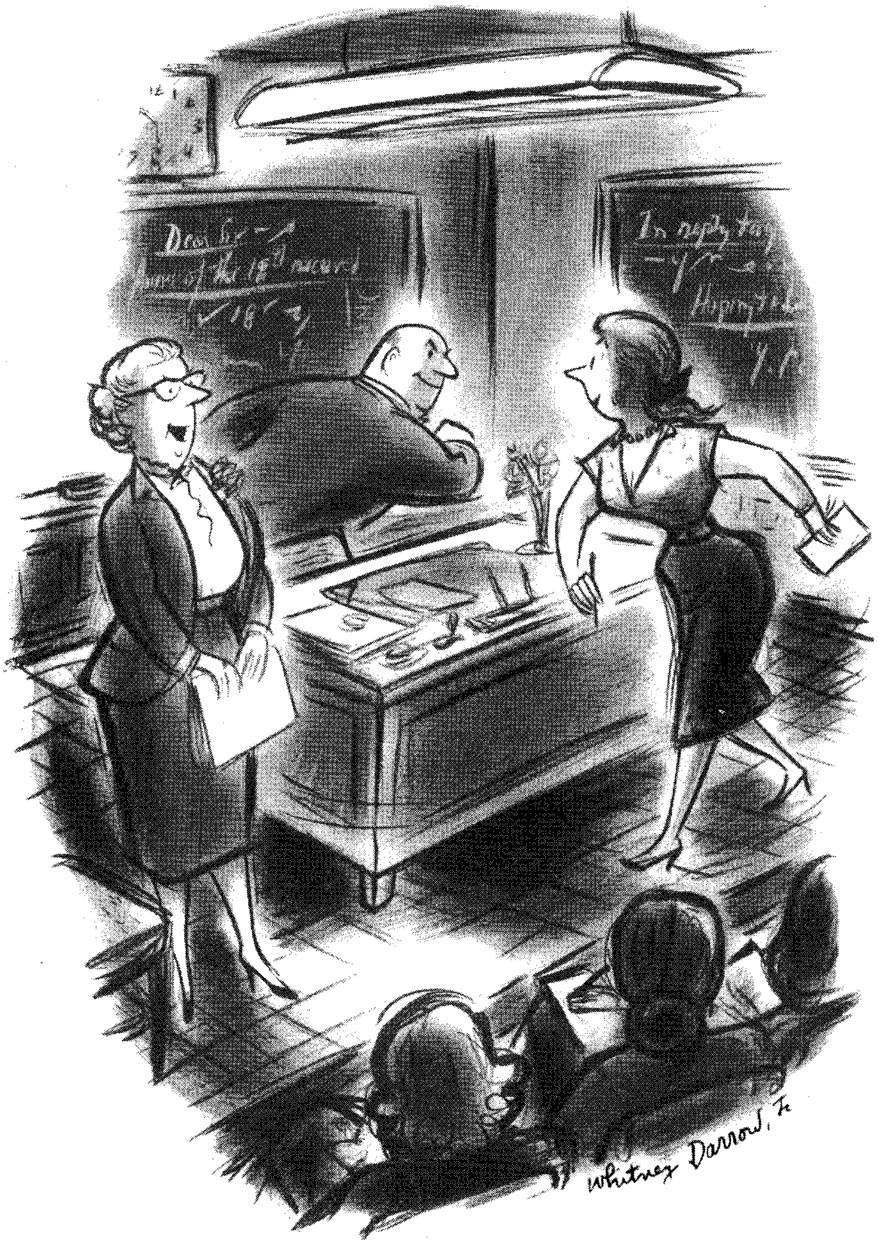
As a rule, the young women in the Sugar Daddy drawings don't have day jobs. They have night jobs—showgirl, cigarette girl, hat-check girl, "working girl"—and they don't punch the time clock till the sun goes down, barring the occasional matinée (or the odd nooner). But even in that benighted era there were women in the nine-to-five "workplace." Somebody had to take the dictation and fetch the coffee, and it went without saying that that somebody was female. Then, as now, the office was a frequent setting for cartoons; then, as now, the artists' theme was usually power. Leafing through the yellowing cartoon scrapbooks in *The New Yorker's* library, one is struck by how lightly what we now regard as sexual harassment was treated. Coping with the boss's unwanted attentions was such a routine aspect of a secretary's job that Whitney Darrow, in a 1954 drawing (reprised overleaf), made fending them off part of the secretarial-school curriculum.

Still, the old cartoonists realized, however dimly, that, whatever may happen in night clubs, sex isn't really supposed to be part of the deal at the office. The young woman clutching her steno pad in the 1958 Taylor drawing reprinted on page 144 just wants to do her job, but she's more resigned to than angry about getting mauled by the boss—not for the first time, evidently. Another Taylor drawing, from 1956, renders a similar idea in softer tones. In a handsomely furnished living room, two matrons sit chatting on a sofa. One turns to the other and says complacently, "Oh, yes, he's retired, but the poor dear finds it so hard to make a complete break." Across the room, her dotty husband, wearing a beautifully tailored business suit, sits in his easy chair, with a pretty, primly dressed young woman on his lap. And Peter Arno, as usual, cuts to the chase—literally, in the case of the drawing on this page, first published in 1944.

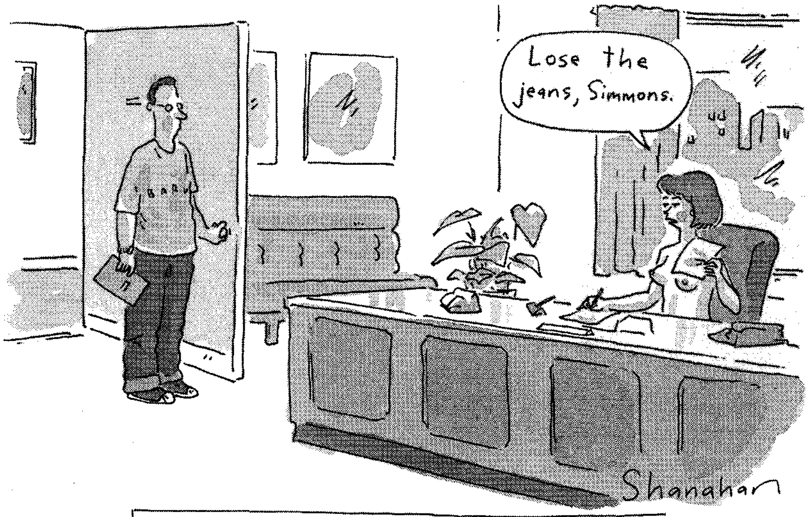
THE spread of the ideal of gender equality during the nineteen-seventies radically changed the social world that the cartoonists chronicled. The fond indulgence (or sexist cluelessness, depending on your point of view) with which Arno and his contemporaries viewed the codger/gold-digger paradigm became at best an anachronism, at worst an offense. Company presidents chasing executive assistants around desks no longer seemed cute: such not so harmless antics began to provoke not laughter but protest and, eventually, laws and lawsuits. Meanwhile, in the first blush of what nervous ex-chauvinists kept insisting on calling "women's lib," the cry of "That's not funny!" was heard in the land. The cartoonists had to scramble.

With the tables turned, some artists adopted a strategy of simple reversal. In a 1992 cartoon by Tom Cheney, for example, a bunch of hard-hatted female construction workers lounging around a building site hoot and whistle at a guy carrying an attaché case: "Yo! Nice butt!" and "I think I'm in love!" and "Looking for me, sweetie?" In countless post-Arno cartoons—Danny Shanahan's 1998 "Casual-Sex Fridays" (page 148) being one of the best—it's the woman who occupies the seat of power.

More deeply than any other cartoonist, Lee Lorenz—who has drawn for the magazine since 1958, and who served as its cartoon editor from 1973 until last year—has explored the evolving world of sexual politics. In 1993, a few months after dreaming up the


Whitney Darrow, Jr.

"Notice, class, how Angela circles, always keeping the desk between them..."

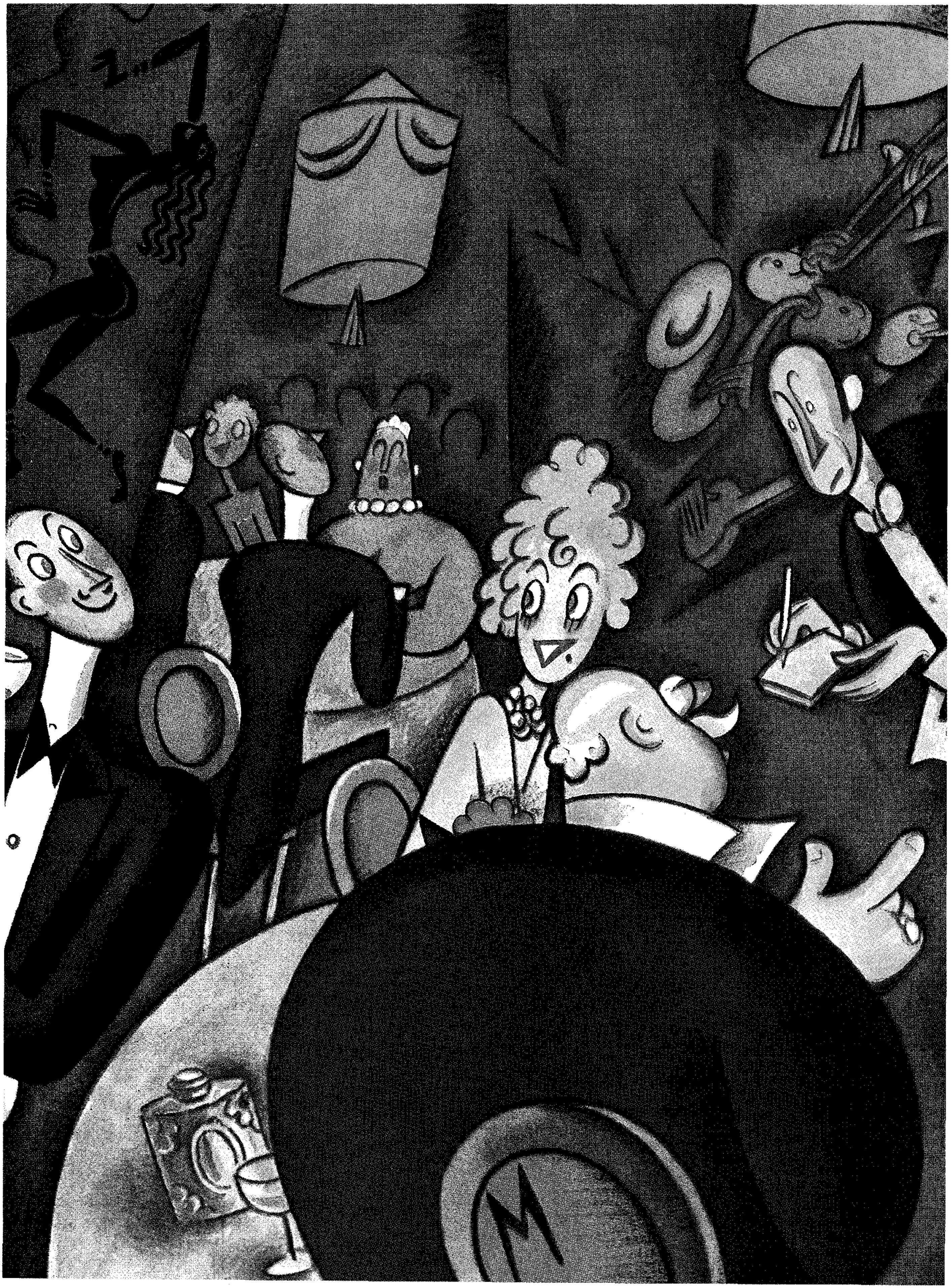


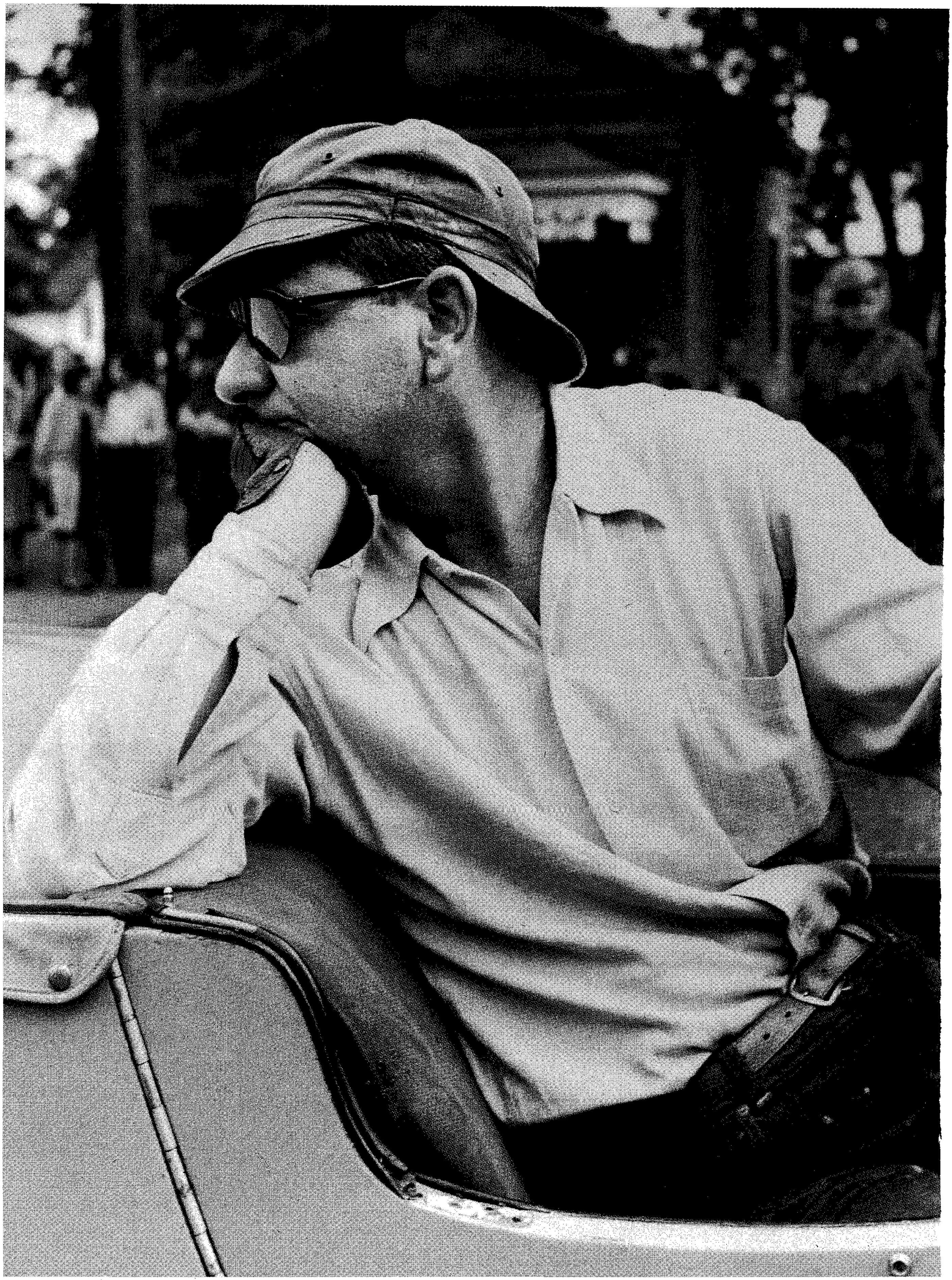
CASUAL-SEX FRIDAYS

beach-resort cartoon reprinted here (page 147, right), he marks Christmas with a worried-looking Santa at his desk listening to a message over his intercom: "A sugarplum fairy to see you, sir—with her lawyer." In 1994, Lorenz has a middle-aged boss lady sitting topless at her desk with her blouse draped over the back of her swivel chair. She doesn't bother to look up from her work as she growls at a male subordinate who is standing at her door, "Feel free to loosen your tie, Harrison—the air-conditioning is out." And in 1995, once again giving long-suffering older women a bit of their own back, he shows one of them as an alien abductee inside a flying saucer. A lovestruck little E.T. is shyly offering her a heart-shaped box of candy and a bouquet of flowers. Arms akimbo, she tells him severely, "Very nice, but I understood there were to be bizarre sexual experiments."

At the same time, Lorenz has kept open his lines of communication to the old faith. But he takes the sexist sting out of it by going beatifically, goofily over the top. Consider two examples, both from last year. In the first, an elderly, baggy-faced executive sits at his desk—on which three extremely curvy nude women are lounging in poses of exaggerated abandon—and remarks to a crony, "It's my only vice." The second, published shortly after the chairman of the Federal Reserve had warned against stock-market euphoria, is a kind of homage to the chase-around-the-desk cartoons of old. But this time both chubby boss and stacked secretary are romping half-naked, leaping and grinning and joyfully strewing their clothes all over the office as the boss cries, "Irrational exuberance, Miss Billings—and Alan Greenspan take the hindmost!"

With many of feminism's battles won, everybody seems to have relaxed a little. The lascivious tycoons and predatory bosses of decades past have their contemporary counterparts, of course, but such people no longer run the show. Their immunity has been revoked. As the sand runs out of the millennial hourglass, the drawings of Arno & Co. reclaim some of their innocent naughtiness. They have a certain period charm, don't you think? ♦





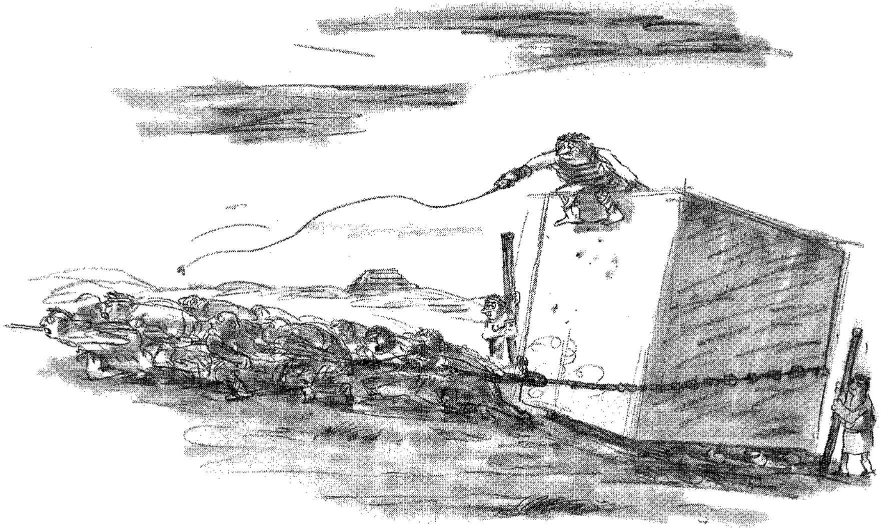
Charles Addams photographed in the driver's seat of one of his classic sports cars forty-one years befo

s death. Now he's back.

ALBUM

THE ADDAMS TROVE

BY ROBERT MANKOFF



"Whatever became of that alternative source of energy?"

Charles Addams was not *The New Yorker's* most prolific cartoonist. That honor goes to Alan Dunn, who did an astounding nineteen hundred and six cartoons for the magazine. Addams managed to publish barely twelve hundred. But Addams is our most prolific posthumous cartoonist.

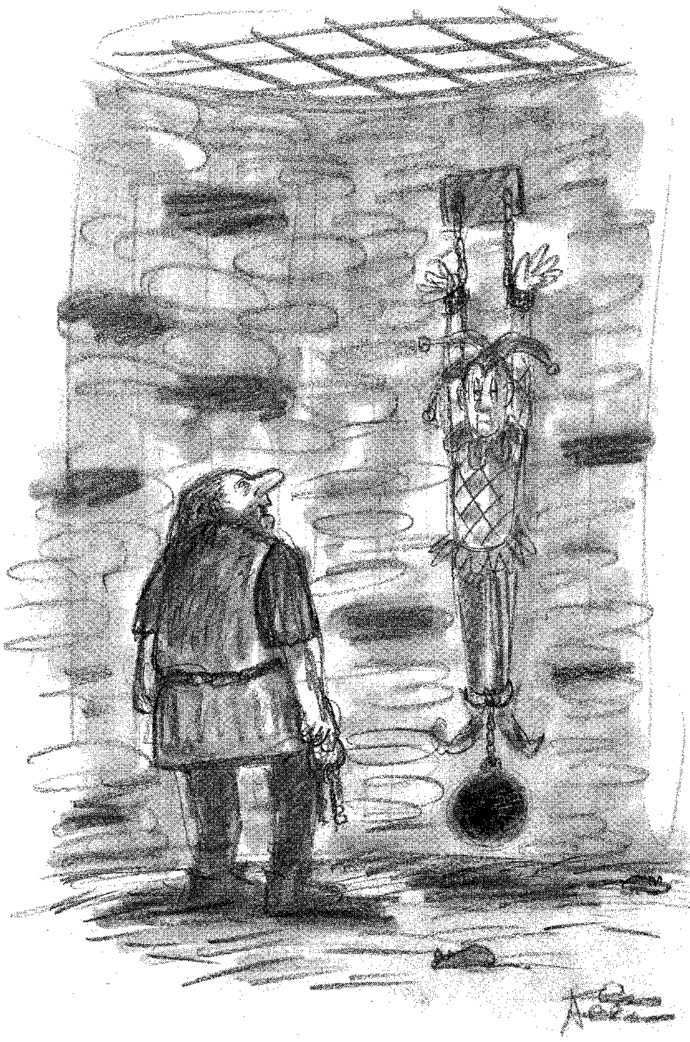
Addams died on September 29, 1988. In the next five years, *The New Yorker* published, from its Addams inventory, four covers and sixteen drawings; the last Addams cartoon in our cupboard appeared, without special fanfare, in the issue of February 22, 1993. Now, ten years after Addams's death, the haunting resumes. He has started submitting cartoons again. Well, not he, actually. She.

She is Tee Addams, Charles Addams's widow. This past summer, I travelled the length of Long Island to a secluded house by a pond to see her. She had offered to show me some unpublished drawings by Charles Addams. There, amid a family collection of casket handles, miniature suits of medieval armor, a statue of a raven, a stuffed mongoose, and two pairs of brass knuckles, were more than four hundred pencil sketches of ideas for cartoons which Addams had left at the time of his death. In the language of the trade, we call these "roughs." When a rough is selected for the magazine, the artist redraws it—more carefully, we hope, and usually in ink. Then it becomes a "finish." (Clearly, if magazine cartooning is ever going to get any real respect it's going to need better jargon.)

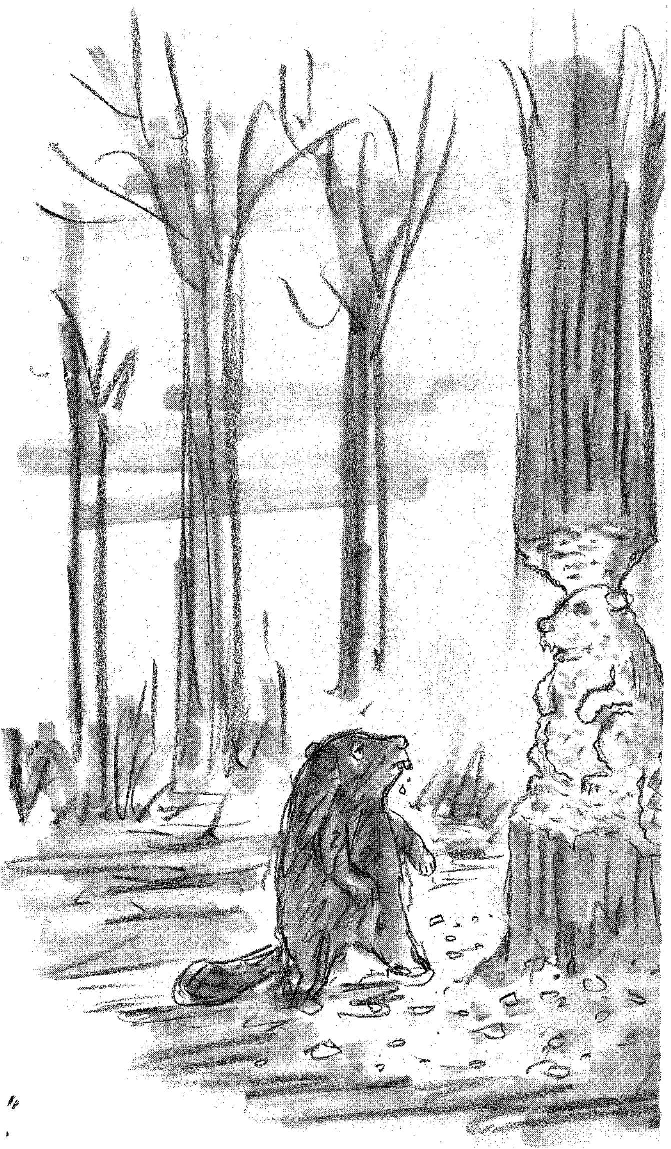
Some artists' roughs are very rough indeed, but—as the accompanying selection, a first installment, shows—many of the Addams sketches were in a fairly finished state. And the ideas that the drawings convey aren't sketchy at all. They bring us back to Addams's macabre yet inviting world of inverted values, surreal switcheroos, and quiet chills. In that world, a deceptive calm prevails. But darkness is always lurking, even in the midday sun, and big themes—mortality, mayhem, domination, power—are never far away. No one has ever squeezed as many laughs out of ominousness as Charles Addams did. And does.

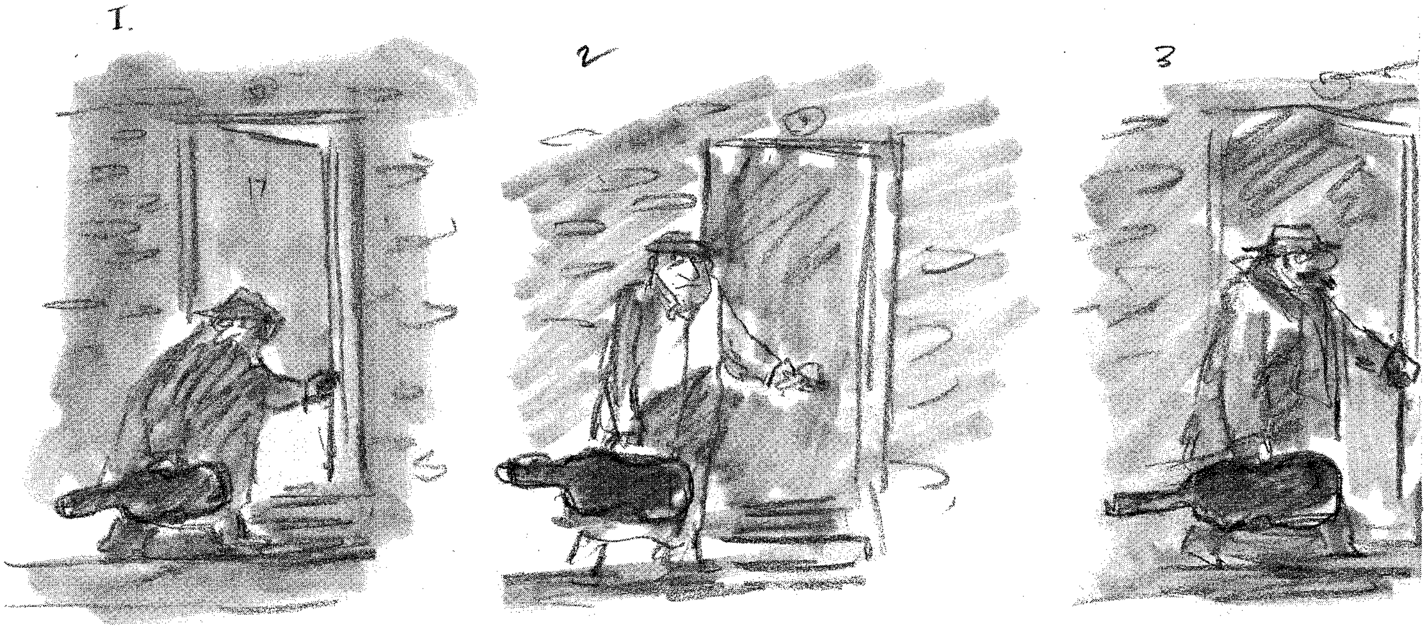
But enough analysis. Analyzing humor, they say, is like dissecting a frog: nobody is much interested, and the frog dies. In Addams's world, though, a dead frog is the best kind. Just pop it in the cauldron, add eye of newt, and stir. ♦

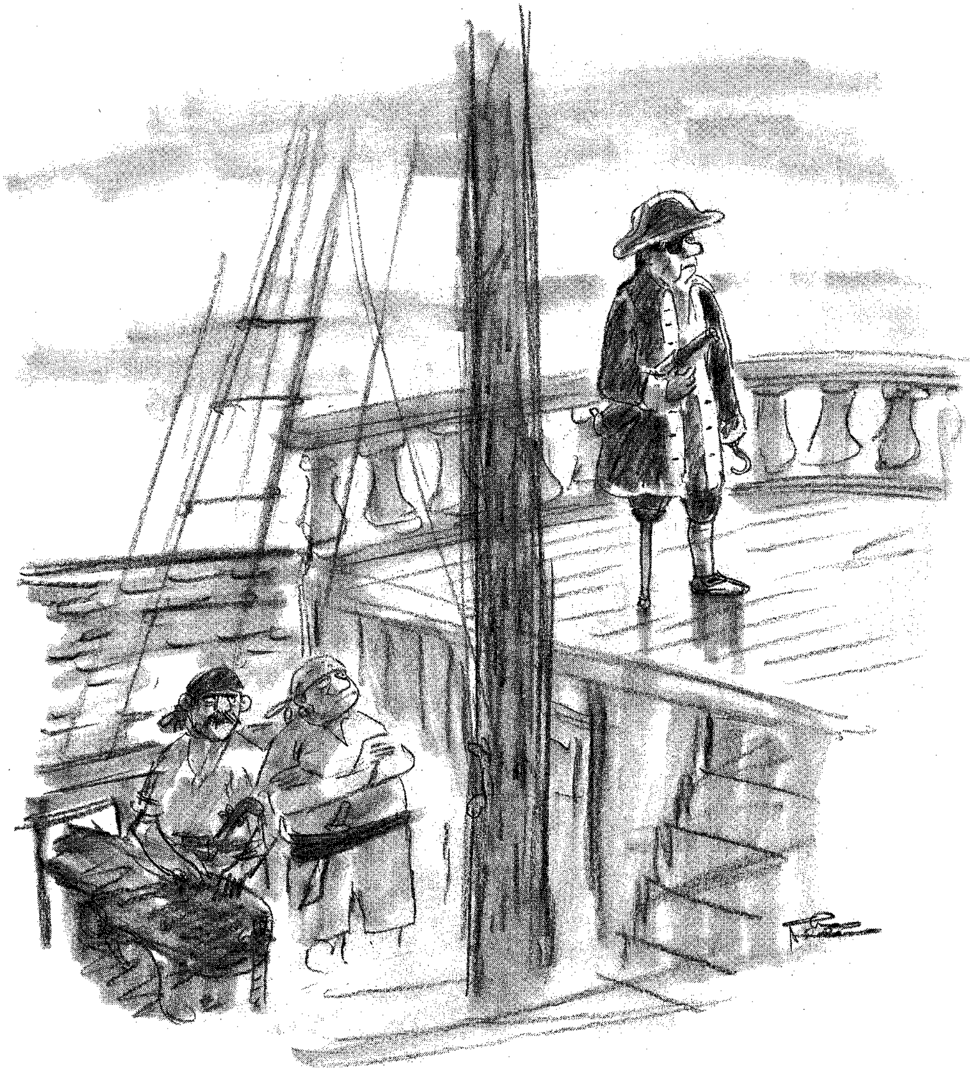
GEORGE SILK/LIFE MAGAZINE © TIME INC.



"If it's any consolation, that was the best impersonation of the King I've ever seen."

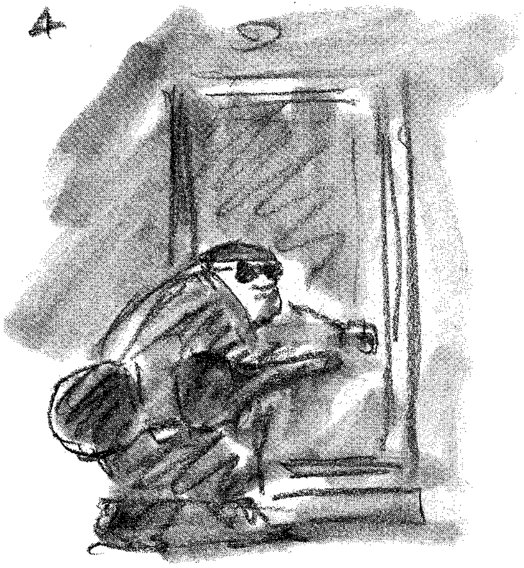






"He's a great leader, but accident prone."

4



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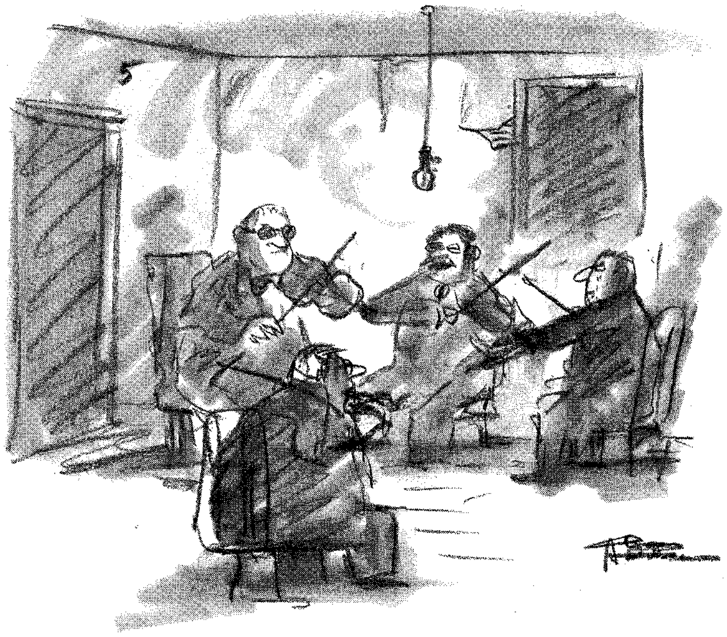
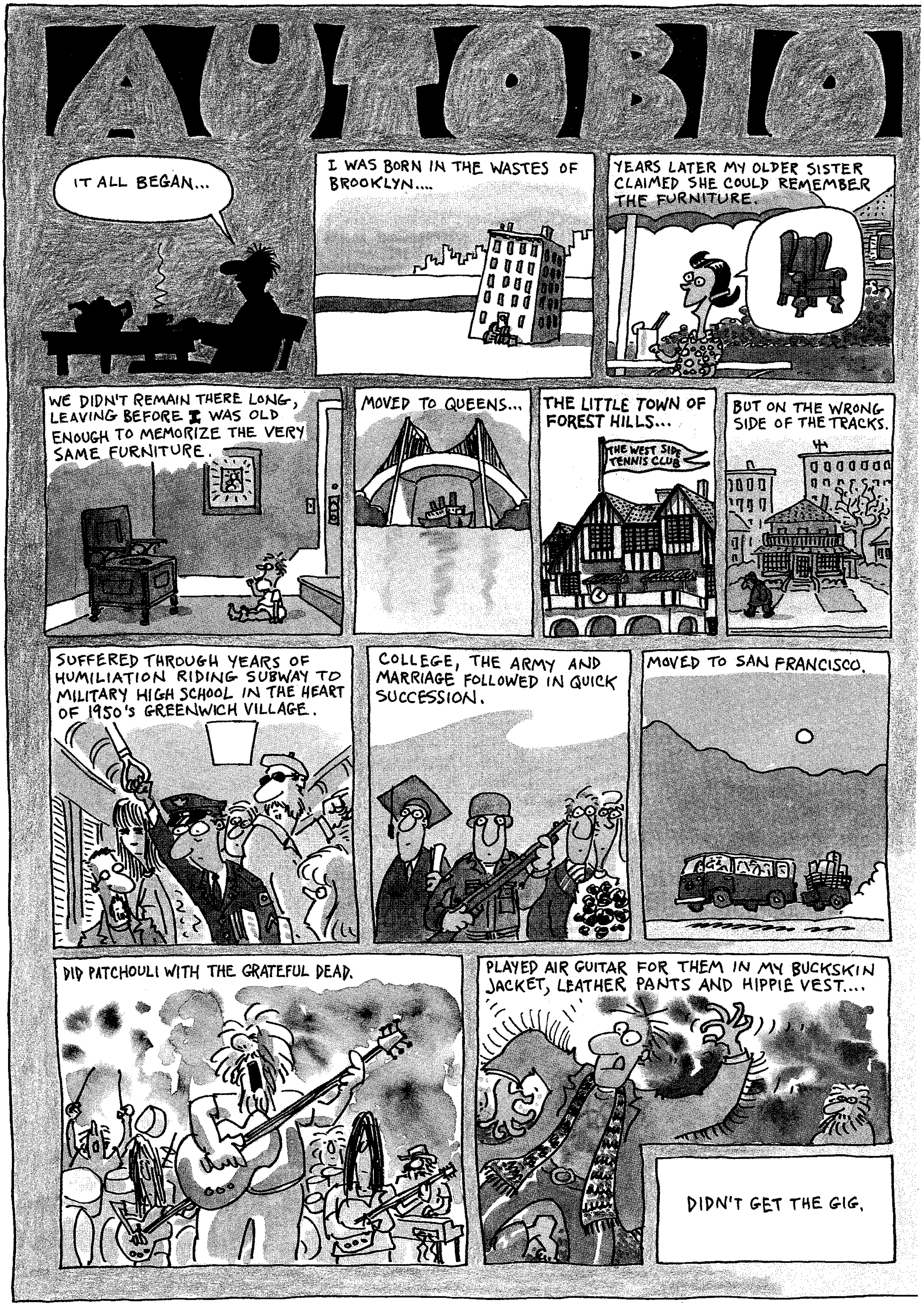
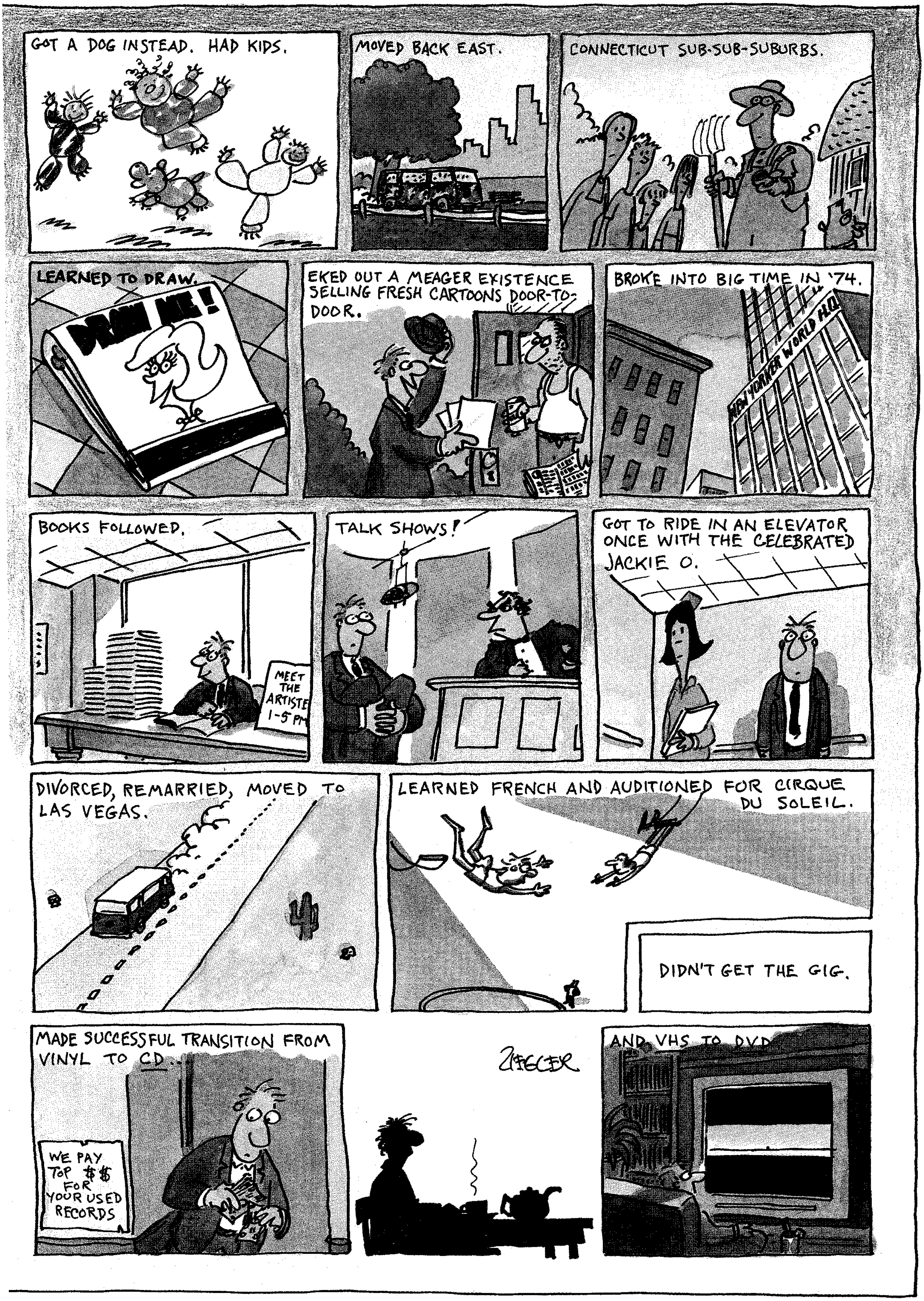
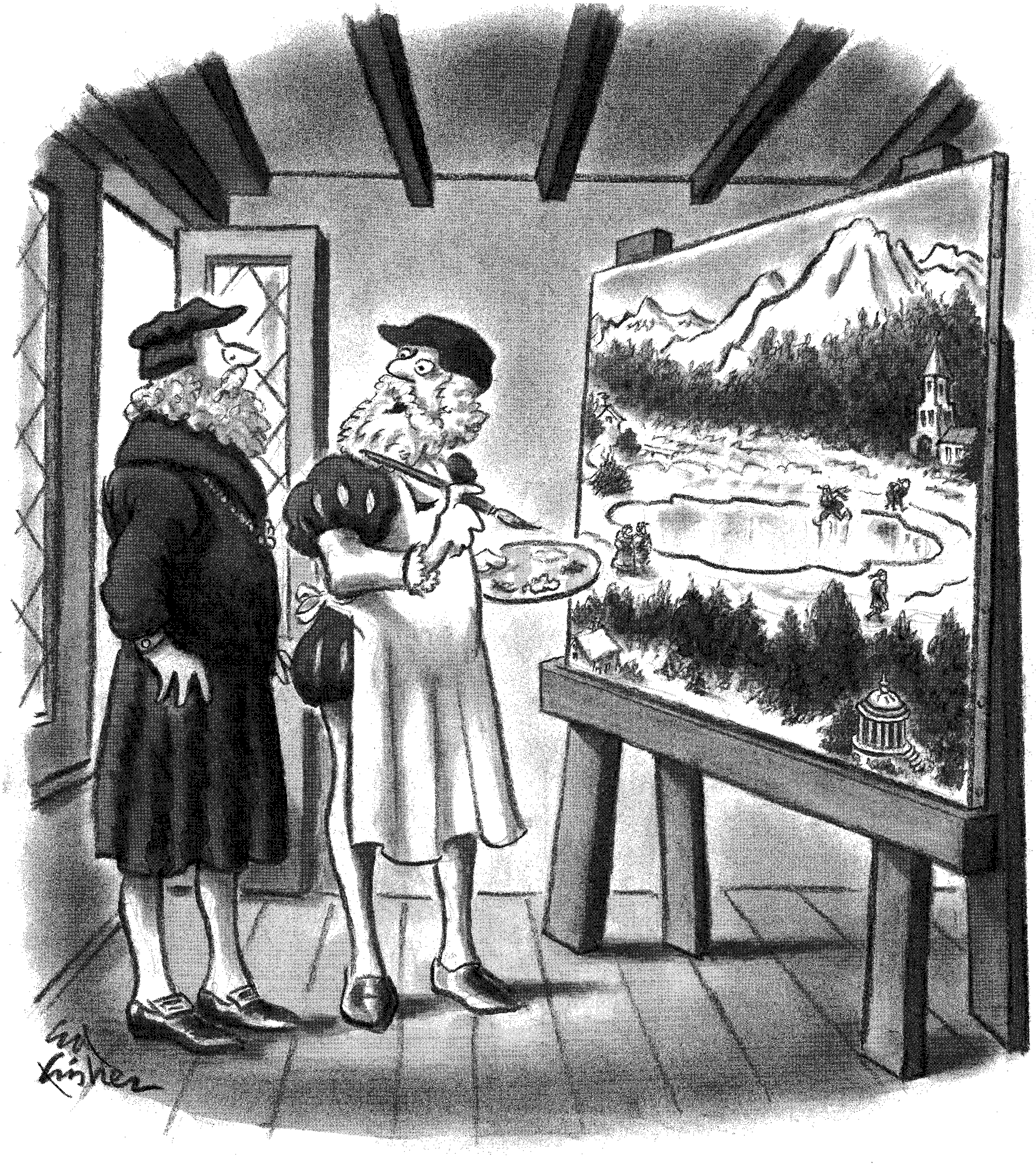
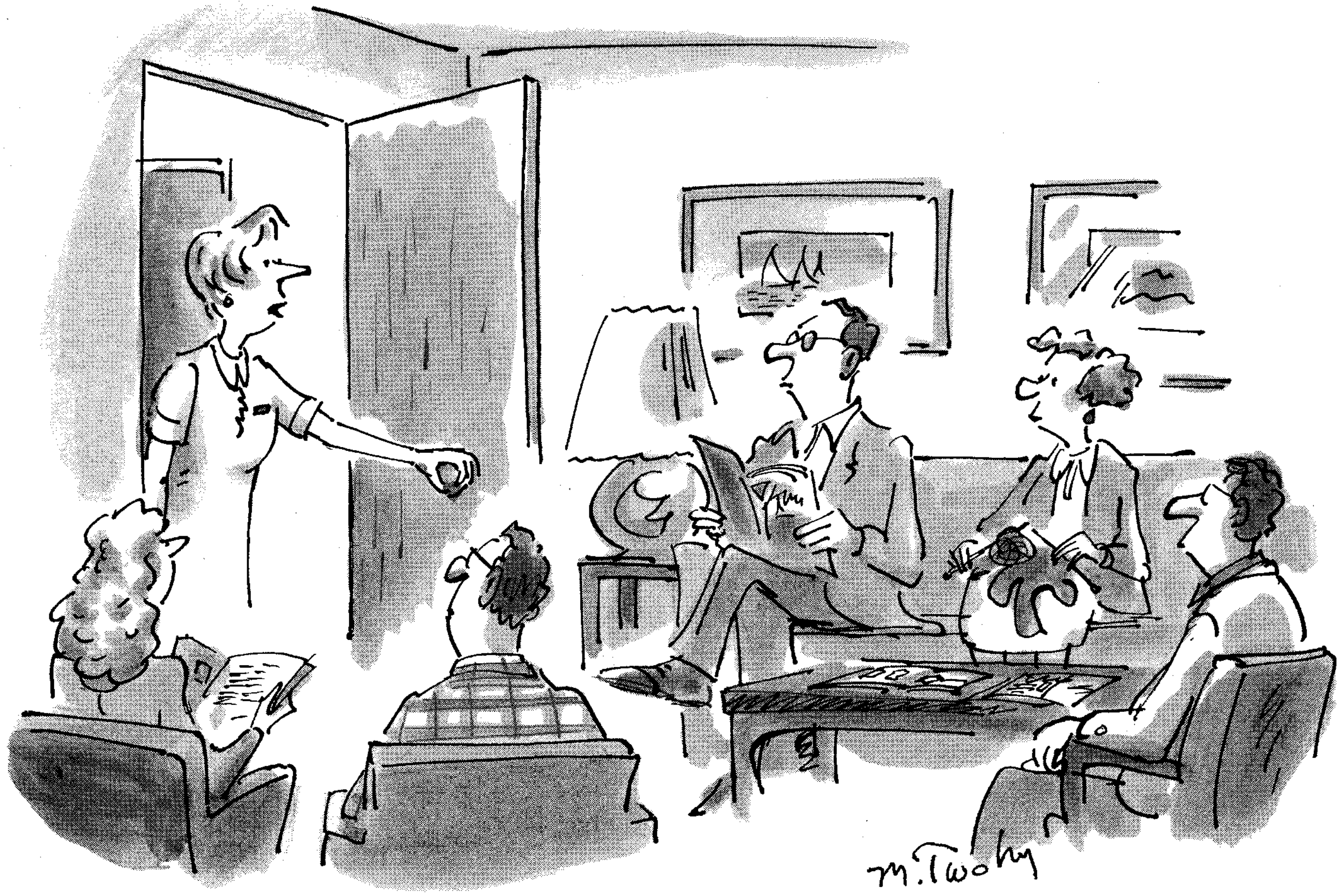



AUTOBIO
IT ALL BEGAN...
I WAS BORN IN THE WASTES OF BROOKLYN....
YEARS LATER MY OLDER SISTER CLAIMED SHE COULD REMEMBER THE FURNITURE.
WE DIDN'T REMAIN THERE LONG, LEAVING BEFORE I WAS OLD ENOUGH TO MEMORIZE THE VERY SAME FURNITURE.
MOVED TO QUEENS...
THE LITTLE TOWN OF FOREST HILLS...
THE WEST SIDE TENNIS CLUB
BUT ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS.
SUFFERED THROUGH YEARS OF HUMILIATION RIDING SUBWAY TO MILITARY HIGH SCHOOL IN THE HEART OF 1950'S GREENWICH VILLAGE.
COLLEGE, THE ARMY AND MARRIAGE FOLLOWED IN QUICK SUCCESSION.
MOVED TO SAN FRANCISCO.
DID PATCHOULI WITH THE GRATEFUL DEAD.
PLAYED AIR GUITAR FOR THEM IN MY BUCKSKIN JACKET, LEATHER PANTS AND HIPPIE VEST....
DIDN'T GET THE GIG.

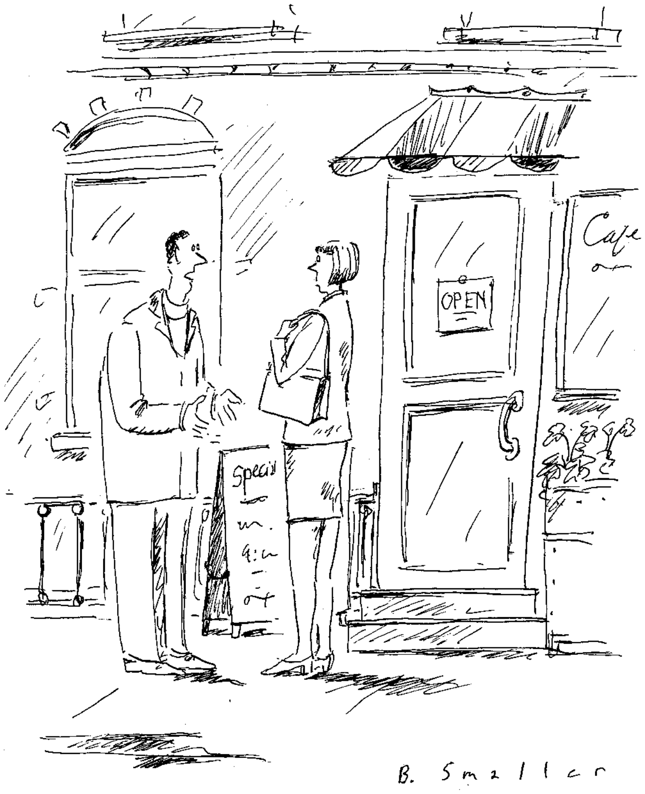

GOT A DOG INSTEAD. HAD KIDS.
MOVED BACK EAST.
CONNECTICUT SUB-SUB-SUBURBS.
LEARNED TO DRAW.
DRAW ME!
EKED OUT A MEAGER EXISTENCE SELLING FRESH CARTOONS DOOR-TO-DOOR.
BROKE INTO BIG TIME IN '74.
NEW YORKER WORLD HQ
BOOKS FOLLOWED.
MEET THE ARTISTE 1-5 PM
TALK SHOWS!
GOT TO RIDE IN AN ELEVATOR ONCE WITH THE CELEBRATED JACKIE O.
DIVORCED, REMARRIED, MOVED TO LAS VEGAS.
LEARNED FRENCH AND AUDITIONED FOR CIRQUE DU SOLEIL.
DIDN'T GET THE GIG.
MADE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION FROM VINYL TO CD...
WE PAY TOP $$ FOR YOUR USED RECORDS
ZIEGLER
AND VHS TO DVD.



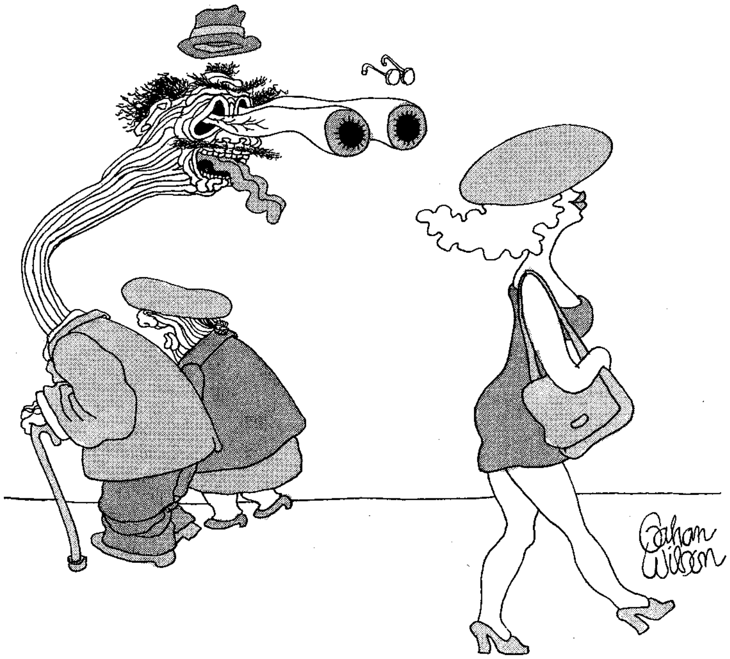
"Why, no. I've never thought of putting funny little captions on the bottom."



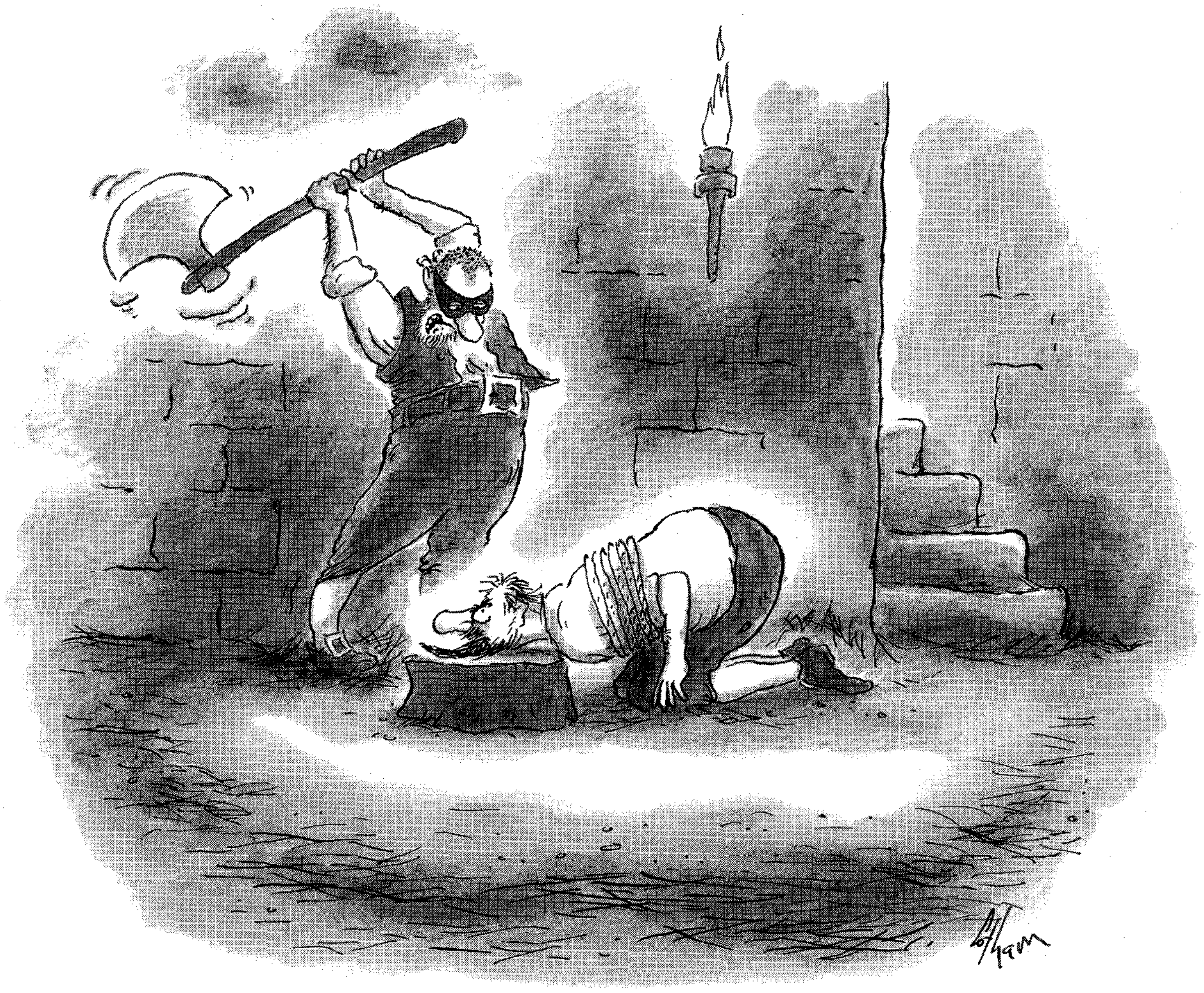
"Who's the sickest?"


OPEN
Cafe
Special
B. Smaller

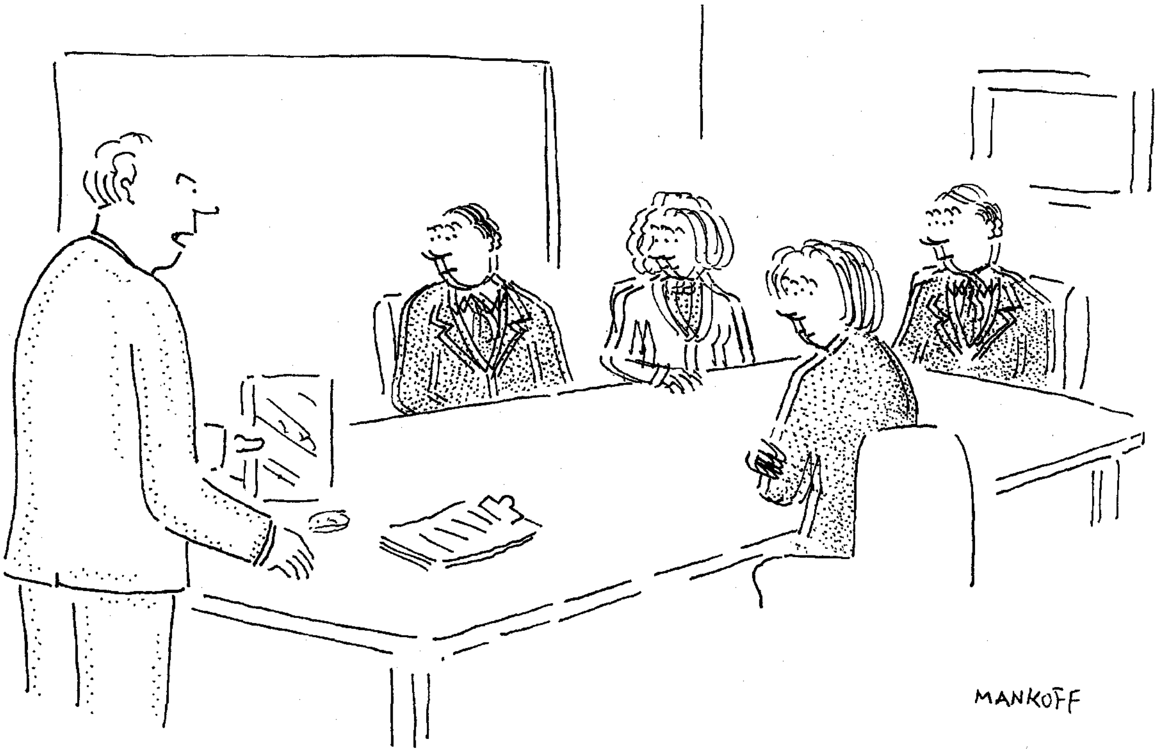
"I'm not saying that I don't have intimacy issues. I'm just saying that I prefer to work on them by myself."


Gahan Wilson

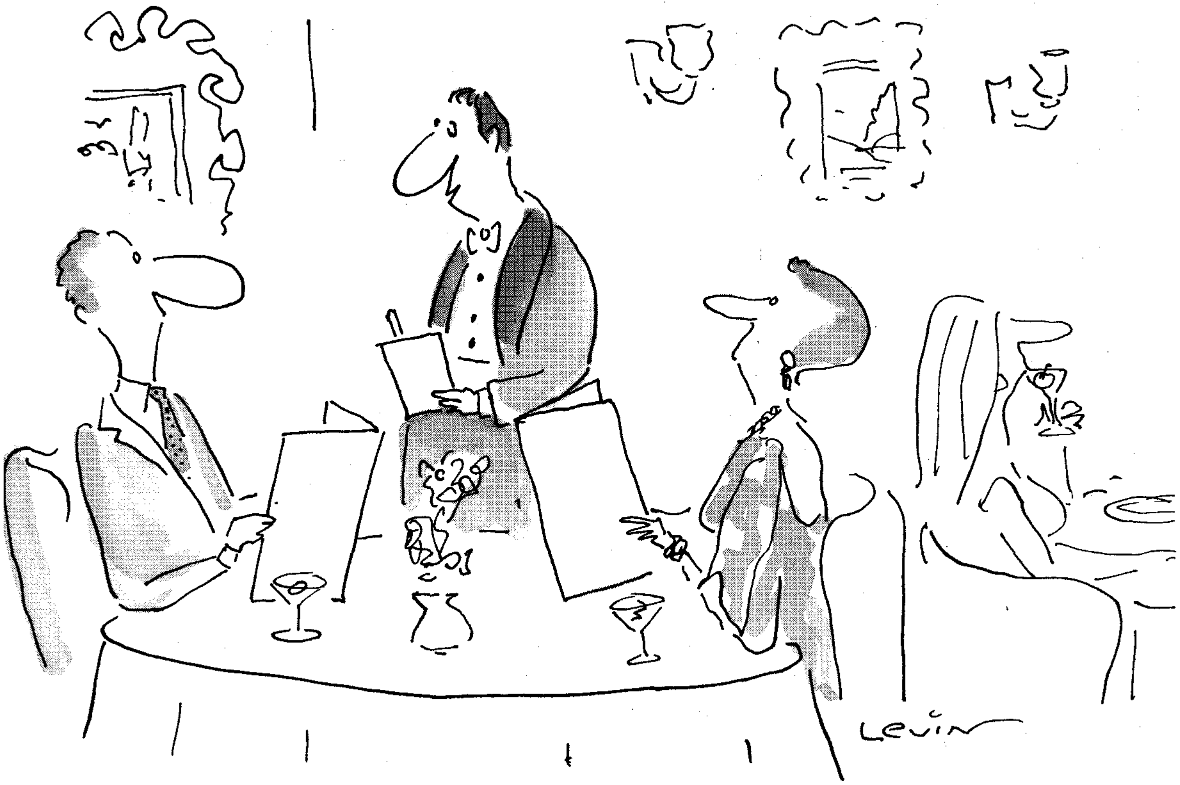
"I wish you wouldn't do that, Edwin."



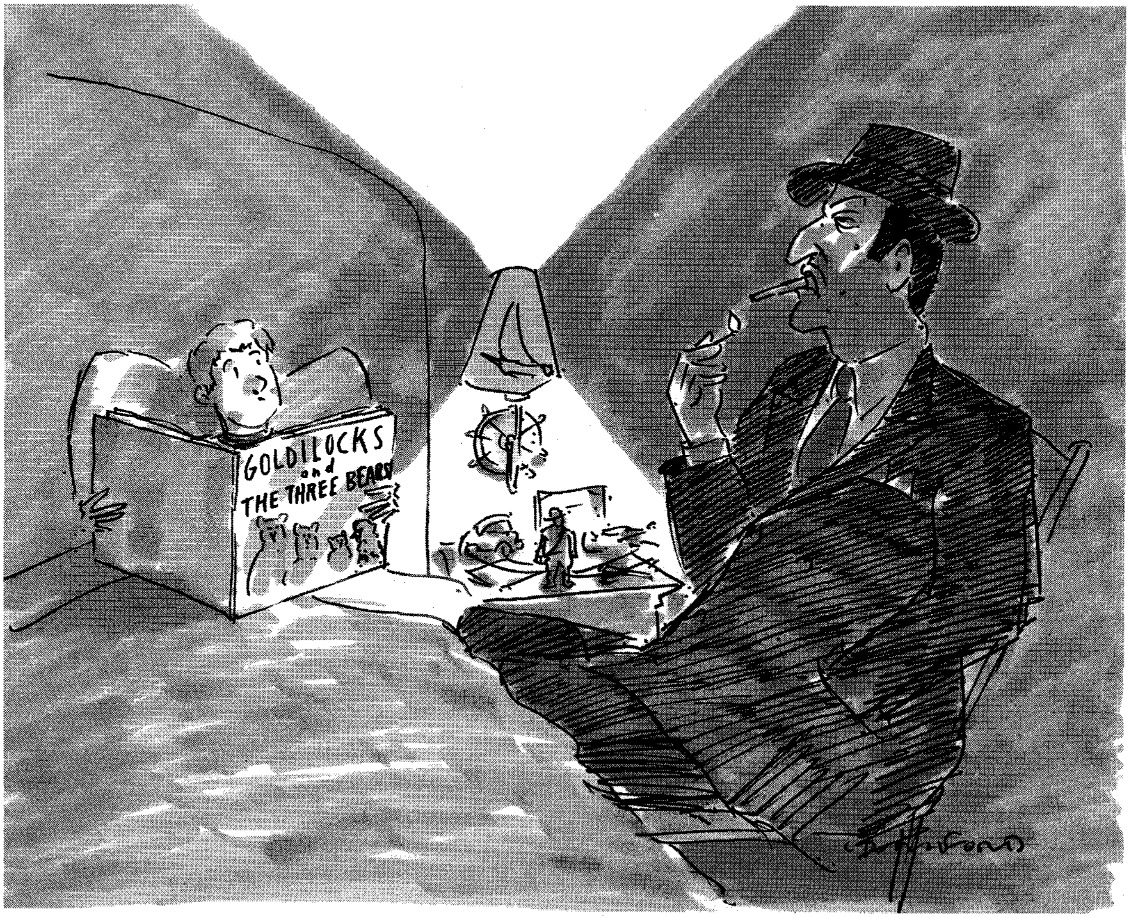
"Say when."



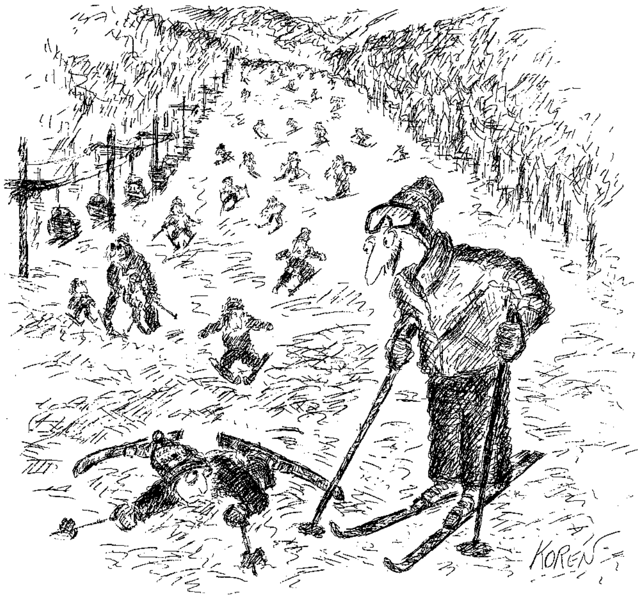
"Geez, you're the worst focus group I've ever seen."



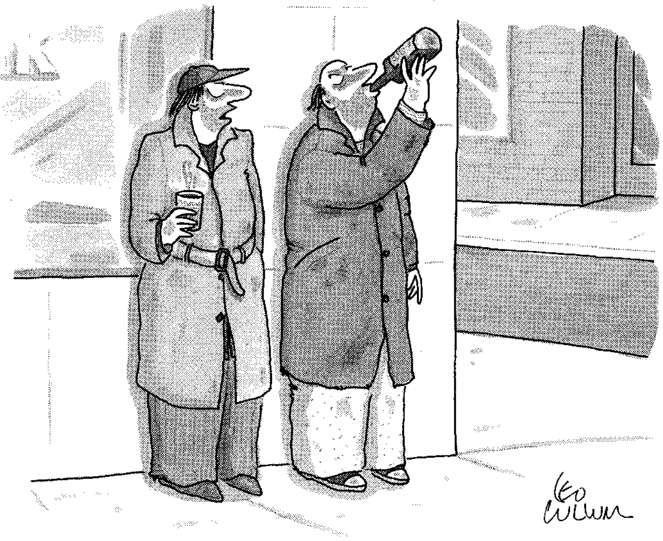
"Might I suggest the most expensive wine and the most expensive dinner?"


GOLDILOCKS and THE THREE BEARS

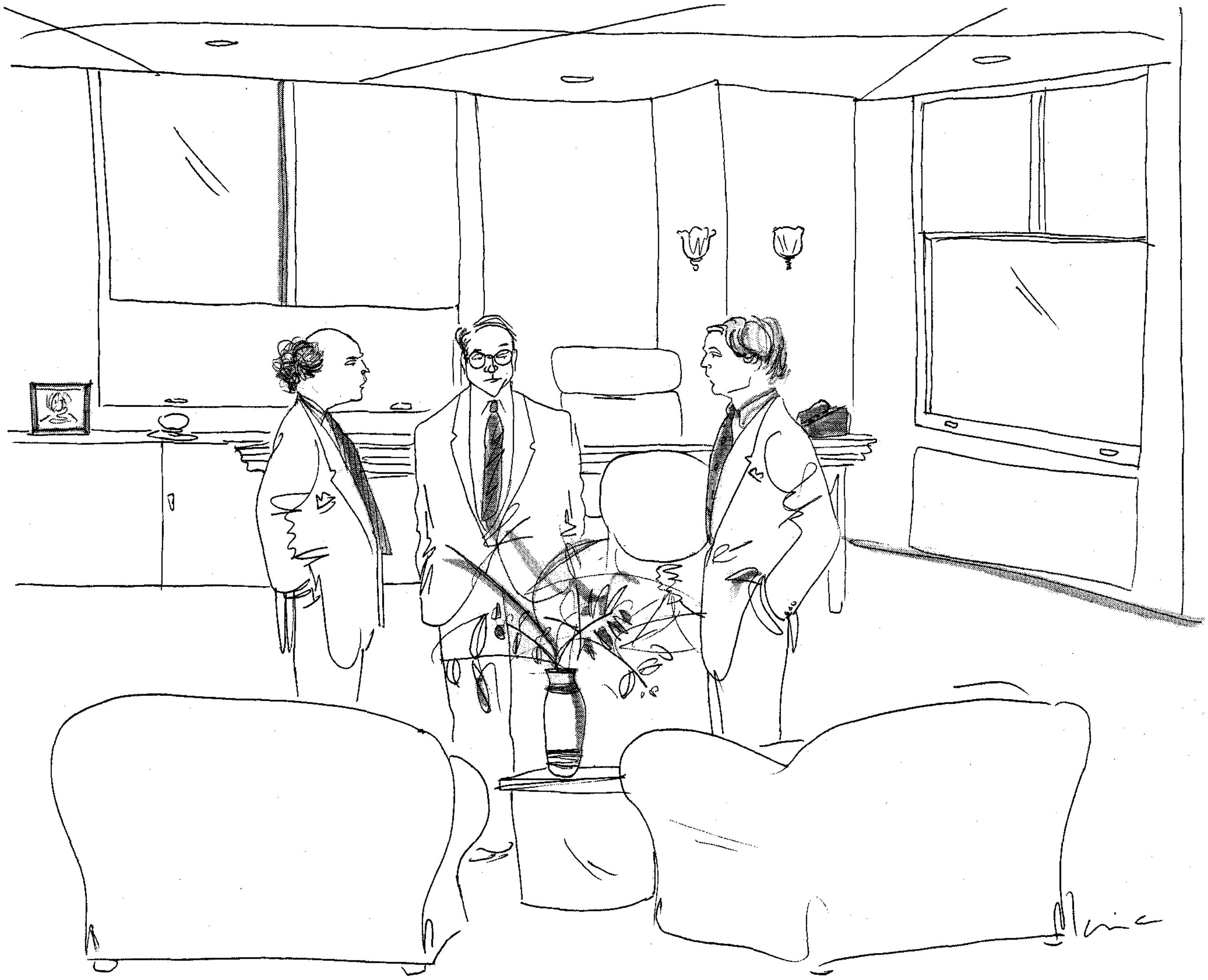
"Better read it yourself, Sparky. Uncle Sal's had it up to here with fairy crap."



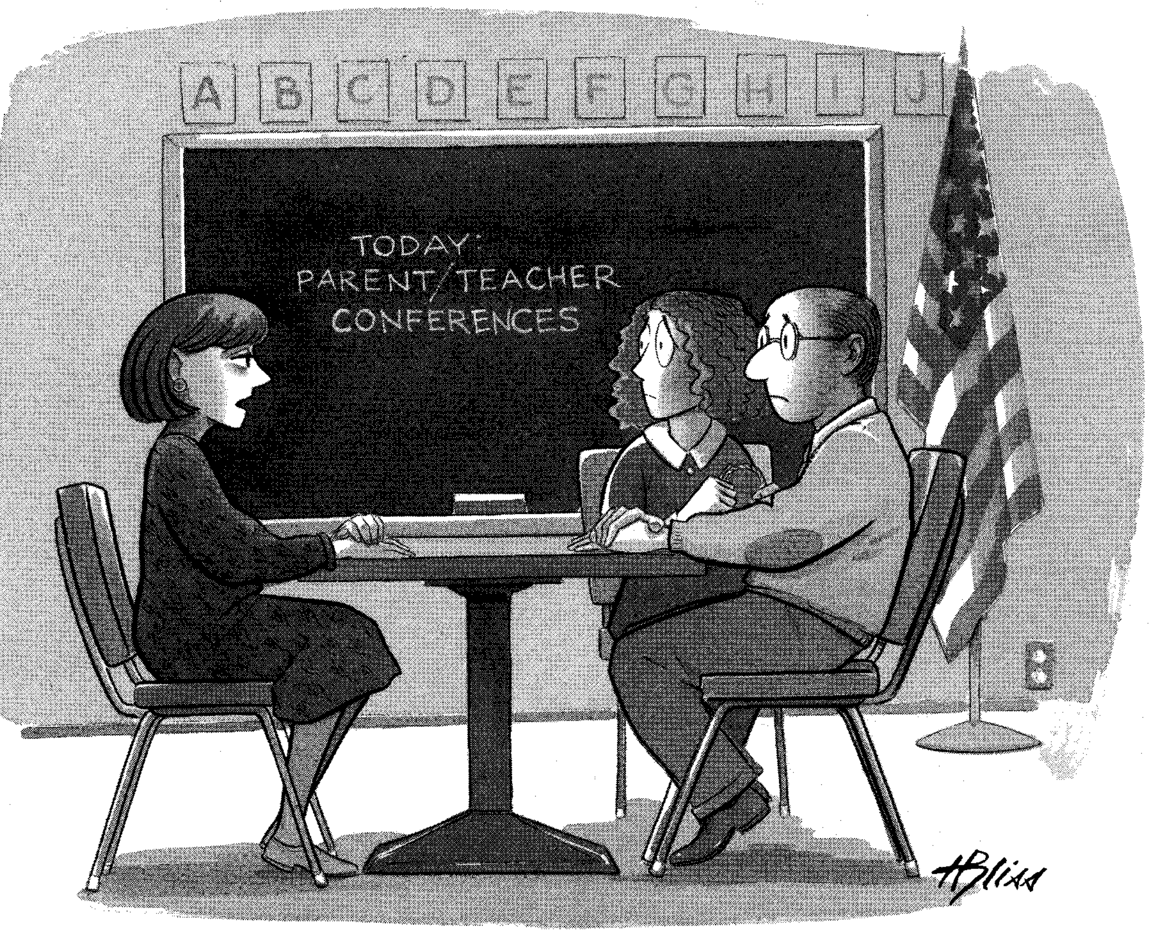
"Great fall, Josh!"



"That is not one of the seven habits of highly effective people."



"Mr. Mistrum, here, will help you with the short end of the stick."


A
B
C
D
E
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G
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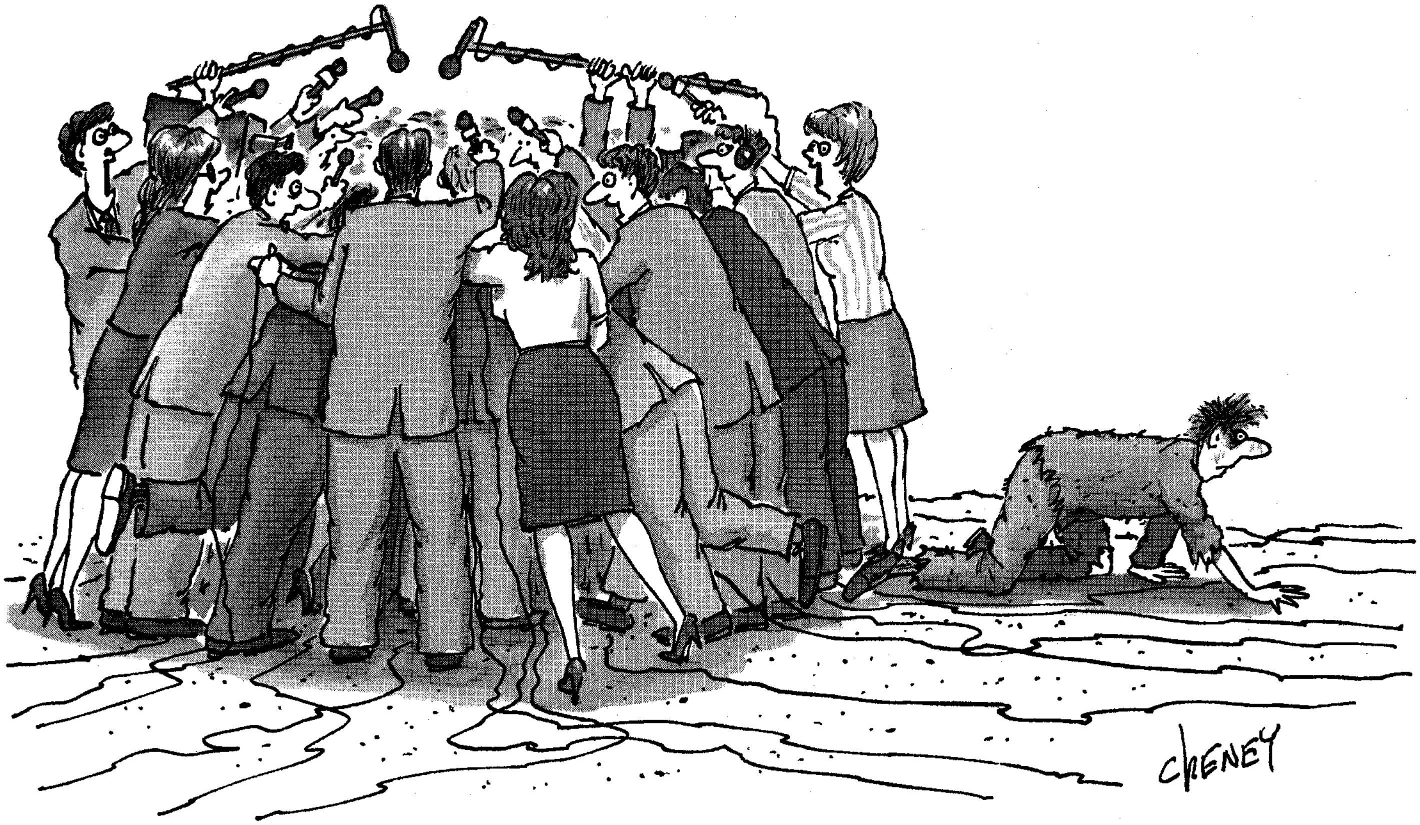
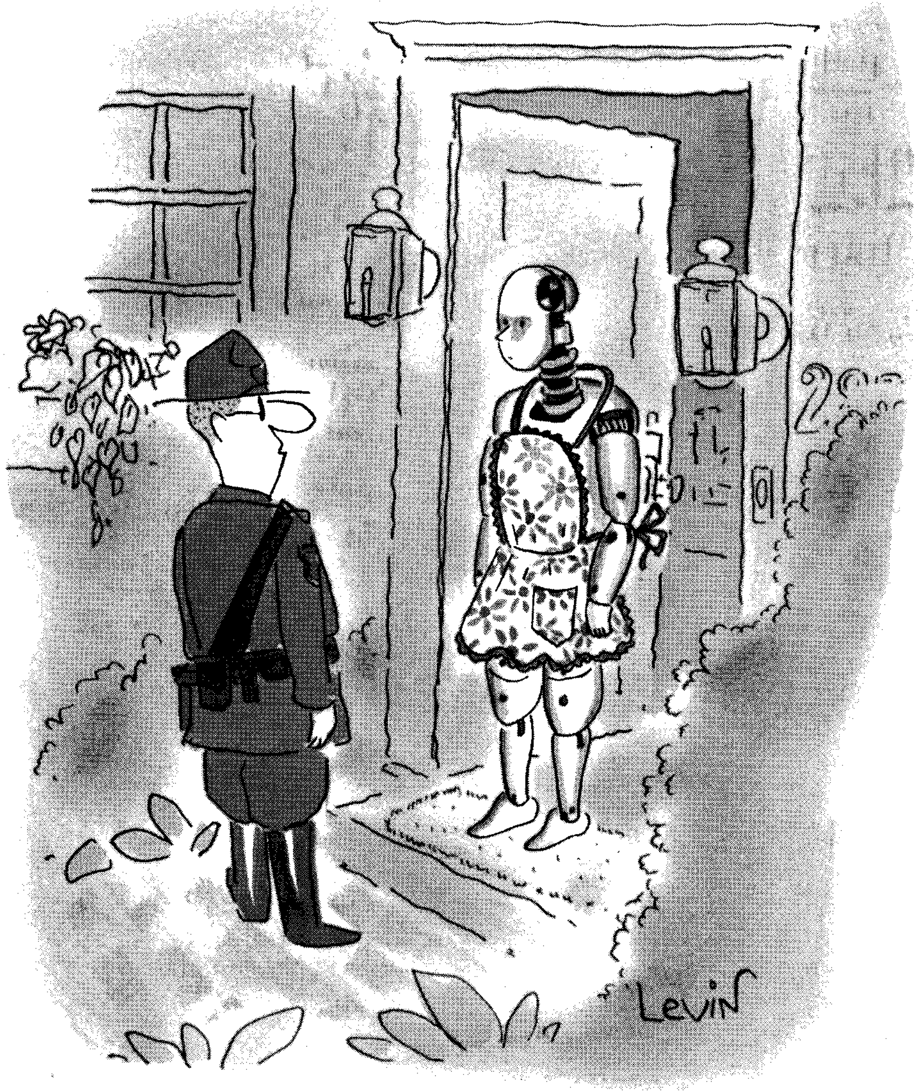
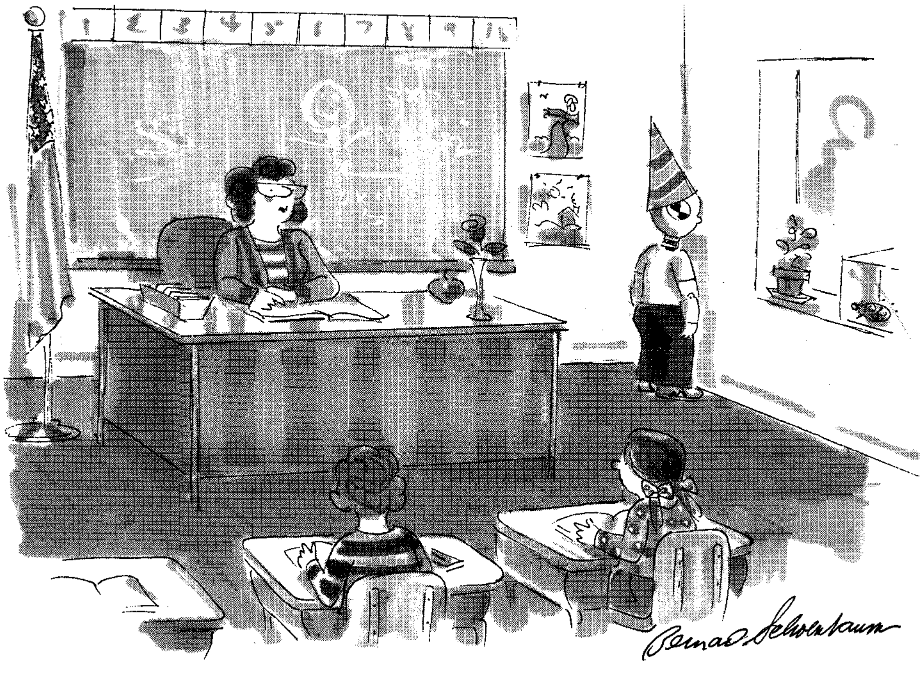
J
TODAY:
PARENT/TEACHER
CONFERENCES
HBliss

"Your daughter's a pain in the ass."





"Ma'am, it's your husband. There's been an auto accident."



ALBUM

CARTOONING FOR DUMMIES

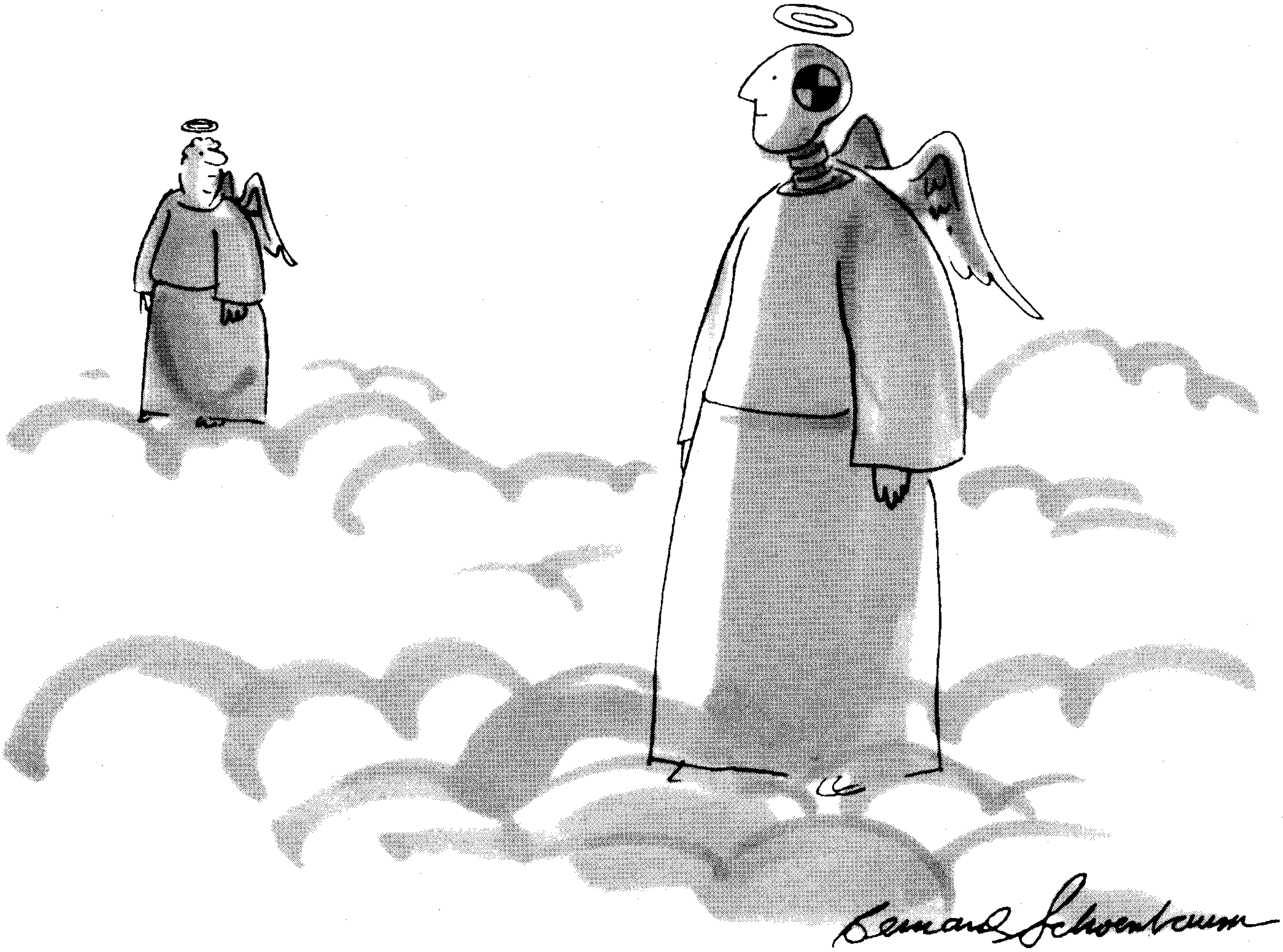
CARTOONING is hard work, and when the muse takes a coffee break the artist reaches into the bottom drawer for his or her handy-dandy book of cartoon clichés. This indispensable volume includes all the old standbys: the desert island; the Trojan horse; the caveman; the true believer with his end-of-the-world sign (James Thurber dubbed him the Get-Ready Man); the hermit atop his mountain.

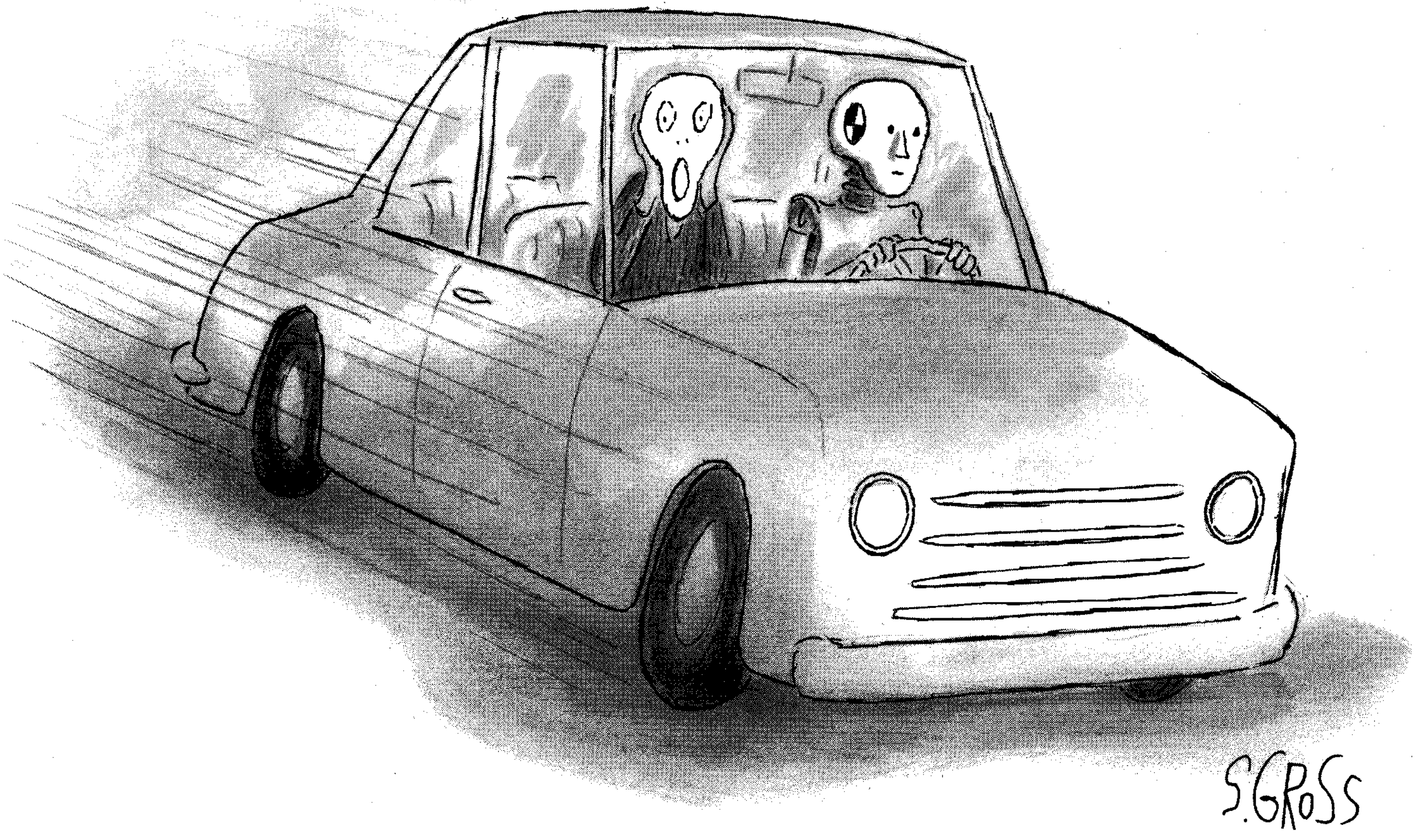
As our consciousness has been ratcheted up, some old favorites have been pensioned off: the cannibal parboiling the missionary; the wife driving through the garage door; the lecherous tycoon pursuing the not altogether unwilling blonde. But, as quickly as openings develop, new candidates step forward. Recent additions include the smiley face, Munch's screamer, the checkout bar code, and, of course, the crash dummy.

Short of DNA testing, we will probably never know who created the first desert-island cartoon. But the later entries in the cartoon canon have clearly traceable lineages. The crash dummy made its début in these pages in the issue of August 16, 1993, in a drawing by Arnie Levin (above left). Once introduced, the new stock character became fair game for all. (Cartoonists' ground rules are considerably more generous than, say, screenwriters'. Paranoia is rampant among cartoonists, but lawsuits are almost unknown.)

The spirit in which cartoonists compete to ring new changes on an established theme is similar to the crackle of a "cutting session" among jazz musicians. Trying joyfully to top someone else by borrowing a riff and improvising some unexpected variation on it is both a challenge and a tribute. With any luck, the jam sessions will continue long after Mr. and Mrs. Crash Dummy have joined the cannibal and the missionary, rocking contentedly on the front porch of the Cartoon Home for Retired Clichés. —LEE LORENZ

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: ARNIE LEVIN, 8/16/93; BERNARD SCHOENBAUM;


Bernard Schoenbaum


S.GROSS

FICTION

OVER THERE

Christmas with the neighbors.

BY JULIE HECHT

I OWED my neighbor a visit. She'd left a message on my answering machine just before Christmas. It started with the words "All right, I'll leave a message . . . " People over eighty don't like answering machines, and I don't blame them. I'm like the Unabomber in that respect—hatred of technology. And also, as I heard him described on the news, "a follower of Thoreau."

The message was an invitation to come over and see the amaryllis I'd sent her, just bursting into bloom, but I ignored it. I knew she had a houseful of children and grandchildren, so I could postpone the visit. I figured, they're all in there eating their Christmas pudding, they don't need me. I'll go when she's alone with her dog and cat.

"All right, I'll leave a message" was something my father used to say when he accepted the answering machine, after two decades. But I'm not going there, as Geraldo says on his nightly news show. It's too sad for me over there.

A spiritual adviser was recently quoted as saying that most people have had their hearts broken by the time they're twenty, but he didn't say what had become of those hearts by age forty-five. My neighbor is almost ninety, about twice my age—also about twice as intelligent as anyone I know. The normal response would be to call her back. But she has a hearing problem, and on the phone she really can't hear me. In person, I hoped that some lip-reading could go on.

Her sight hasn't failed her—she's luckier than my father was. Or her brain cells haven't failed her, so the cataract operations can take place. In the case of my parent, mental confusion was a reason to prevent the cataract operations. But surely there's a solution to that. I should have made it my full-time job to find the solutions to all things at the time. Now that I know, it's too late. That's the secret of life—by the time you know, it's too late.

When I got the second message, I decided to go for a visit. I thought I should bring something, even though I'd already sent the double amaryllis in a clay pot with green moss, but a tin of organic cookies from a company in California wouldn't be appreciated over there. Besides, the tin, to my surprise, had a poinsettia on the lid, and I'd tossed it into the recycling pail when I saw it.

A few days before, I had baked a loaf of cranberry bread, but my husband had left it in the oven an extra hour. "I'm going for a walk," I'd told him. "When the timer goes off, please check the bread. If it's not done, set it for fifteen minutes more. O.K.?"

Even though he was at his computer, he looked up and said O.K. Anything to do with food will snap him out of it for a second. But when I returned from my walk—and Thoreau walked four hours a day, so I knew walking was a good thing to do even with a wind chill of seventeen—I smelled the bread but saw no sign of it on the table or stove. "Where's the cranberry bread?" I asked.

"What cranberry bread?" my husband said.

I repeated the conversation we'd had. "I don't recall any conversation like that," he said.

These breads are for him. I've given up eating anything with flour and oil, even organic canola oil. I want to wear a size 8 for the rest of my life, like my two idols, Jacqueline Kennedy and Princess Diana—even though I no longer buy new clothes, due to the influence of my other two idols, Henry D. Thoreau and Samuel Beckett.

The bread was dark brown, not black. So I carved and hacked it out of the Pyrex bread pan, even though it was pretty hot. "Get used to touching hot things with your bare hands," I remembered Julia Child saying on one of her TV shows. The reason given was that it saves time and is much easier than grabbing pot holders. The middle section of the bread was the least hard and burnt, and this was the section I planned to take to my neighbor. She's the one who gave me the recipe, but she doesn't approve of my results. For a few years, I baked the breads in a toaster oven because someone had cleaned our nineteen-thirties stove with oven cleaner and the toxic fumes lingered on.

As a pre-Christmas present to myself this year, and to celebrate my new series of photographs of people with their old appliances, I asked the cleaning person if she would mind rinsing the oven with white vinegar and baking soda. In my early years of domestic servitude, in a manic spree, I actually cleaned our first oven and breathed Easy-Off fumes. My cleaning days are over, even though I buy only Ecover cleaning products, having heard on "All Things Considered" that the factory was the most ecologically advanced in the world. I wanted to jump for joy when I heard that, but I was in the car, fastened in with a seat belt, so jumping was impossible.

The cleaning person said O.K. to my request. She likes the idea of cleaning with white vinegar, but not for the right reasons. It's hard to teach ecology to immigrants. One problem is that they don't have the vocabulary for it. If you ask me, these words should be taught with their first English lesson.

"When I came to this country, I tried to buy vinegar for cooking and they gave me this," she said. "I tasted some, and I couldn't believe it!" Then we both started to laugh. "Is it true that some American people use this vinegar for salad?" she asked. I had to tell her the ugly truth. Then I'm expected to feel ashamed for the whole day, I suppose. I was reminded of the time I was told by a Japanese waitress that a kind of sushi made with fried tempura batter, as an inside ingredient, was invented just for Americans. "Because Americans like greasy stuff," she said.

"You should have seen it here before," my neighbor said. "The people, the commotion! You would have hated it."

MOBILE HOME (FARM), 1994, BY PETER GARFIELD, FEIGEN CONTEMPORARY

During those early years, when cleaning an oven I often asked myself, "Would Jacqueline Kennedy be doing this?" Princess Diana was still a young teen-ager, so the question did not come up in her case.

I'LL just grab the center piece of the baked bread and bring it with me to the neighbor's house, I thought as I spied some red tissue paper that would look good over the tinfoil. Then I found a flashlight and walked around the corner. As I approached the front door, I saw through the window a group of Christians milling about. Because it was Christmas, these people must have thought they had to wear red. Some were people I didn't recognize, and from the Republican looks on their faces I dreaded the introductions.

I know how to fit in with Christians, even though I have a Jewish ancestor, and they do, too, if they count Jesus. Because when I was six or seven my father left me in the toy department of Sears, Roebuck while he went to the tool department. These were the days before children were kidnapped from stores. In any case, the toy department wasn't far out of his sight. I was viewing the dolls displayed on a shelf when I saw an extremely Catholic-looking girl staring at a doll—she stared at it with an intensity I understood. At the time I believed that all girls named Cathy or Kathy were Catholic. Since it was November, I thought I could say something I'd heard regular Americans say: "Are you hoping to get that for Christmas?" But the girl turned on me and said angrily, "I'm getting it *before* Christmas. Whenever I want."

A worse incident occurred the next summer when my father took me to the tennis courts and I waited for him in the shade while he played tennis in the blazing sun. I was introduced to the daughter of my father's tennis partner, and we discussed our life stories for a while, getting to tonsillectomies, now known to be a bad mistake, tonsils being a first line of defense in the immune system. The girl said she'd had her surgery in a doctor's office and gone right home, and I said I'd been in a hospital in Manhattan and stayed a couple of days. The girl insisted that tonsillectomies were never done in hospitals, and she became furious. I couldn't interrupt my father at his favorite game, and by the time it was over the girl had stormed off. I believe she even used the word "liar" in her final parting words. When at last I got to tell my father what had transpired, he couldn't believe it. I wanted him to follow the other father and daughter and explain that my story was true, but they'd gone. Where is this girl now? Probably in some psycho ward. Or, more likely, the head of a flourishing movie company in Los Angeles or New York. The one who has these events on the mind decades later is the one on the way to the ward. On the other hand, the two incidents are perfect preparation for life.

So I think I know how to behave among hard-core Christians, but they don't know about the screaming inside. With this inner screaming going on, I walked into my neighbor's kitchen. Right away I smelled bacon. I kept this to myself, though. Or I should say: to myself and from myself at the same time. Just beneath the conscious level, I might have assumed this: bacon had been cooked there during the day.

"Merry Christmas!" people said to me as I walked in. I had made the faux pas of greeting a gang of these relatives on the street earlier in the day by saying "Hi." They quickly called back in a cold, indifferent, yet reprimanding way, "Merry Christmas!"

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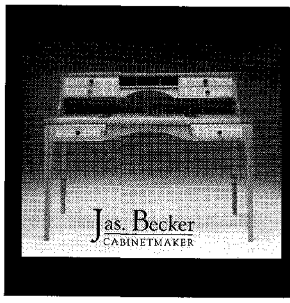
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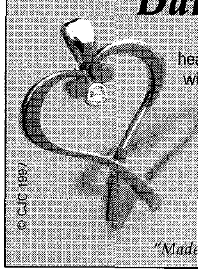
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mas when the temperature is up to sixty degrees again? It's as dreary as it is in Beverly Hills at Christmas, or anytime, for that matter—the only good time in Southern California is when you're standing right under a lemon or orange tree.

When I got over there at six o'clock, they'd been saying "Merry Christmas" all day. They must be sick of it by now, too, I thought. I was the only one there who hadn't been saying it. Of course, they don't know about my ancestor, as the dermatologist I saw for screening of some sun damage didn't know either, when he looked into my light-colored irises and said, "You're a real Wasp. Light hair, light skin, light eyes—you have to be careful."

My neighbor came over to me and said "Merry Christmas." I smiled and leaned forward to give her a kiss. I had never given her a kiss before. I'd never gone over there on Christmas Day before. I'd always thought there was a formal religious meal going on until she told me that people just come and go all day.

"Sit down," she said. I sat down and then she sat down in an easy chair across from me. Others were gathered around the table. Then the introductions began. I showed them the cranberry bread and told my story. I summed it up. I've learned that people don't have much of an attention span.

"We use butter and eggs, but she brings over these macrobiotic treats for Mom," one of the daughters said. But that's not true. If only it were that easy to pass for macrobiotic.

I started off by smiling. I've discovered that smiling works better than talking. I have a new false smile that I use. "You should have seen it here before," my neighbor said. "The people, the commotion! You would have hated it."

"I would have? How can you tell?"

"Instinct," she said.

On the night of this Christmas Day, my neighbor and I were dressed almost alike. Cotton sweatpants, a flannel shirt, and running sneakers. "We want to be comfortable," she explained to the guests. For the special day, I had changed out of my flannel shirt and borrowed a corduroy shirt I'd bought for my husband a few years before. At the time, the shirt was moss-green, but an acci-

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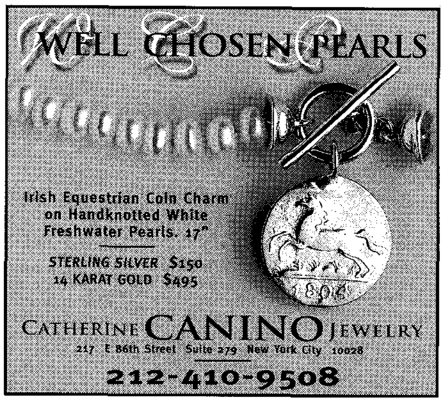
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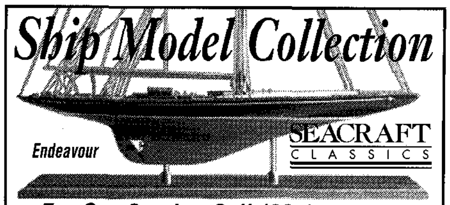
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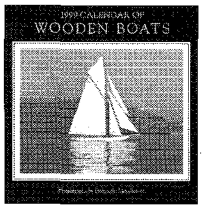
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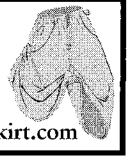
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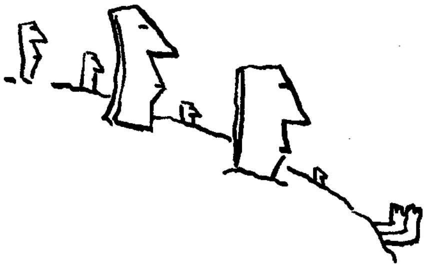
dent with Clorox had turned it beige.

How would she hear me with all the other talking going on was what I was worrying about. "Look at your amaryllis," she said. "It'll bloom in a few days."

"I told them not to put a bow in it!" I said, pulling the red-and-gold ribbon out of the soil where it was stuck on a tiny stake. "I told them no plastic stake for the card. And they didn't use enough moss, either. I should have waited while they packed in the moss."



Suddenly the bottles appeared. Some requested wine, others whiskey. The moment of asking for bottled water was coming up. People don't like the one who asks for water. There's always the split second when they wonder if you're a former alcoholic.

I have to remember to bring my own water, I thought. Club soda in a soft plastic bottle is what they always have. And here, on Christmas Day, not even that. I've given my neighbor a copy of "Natural Health, Natural Medicine," and she's underlined almost everything in it. She loves Dr. Andrew Weil, even though he has a large beard and at first she thought he was a guru. But what about the sentence describing the seeping of the plastic into the water? "Soft plastic bottles can impart plastic molecules to the water." They can't take that in.

My neighbor's son handed me one of those bottles of water and a glass full of ice. I got up and threw the ice into the sink. "I don't need any ice," I explained to him. Another thing these people can't understand is not needing ice. Those who use no alcohol need no ice. "Ice is often contaminated by bacteria," Dr. Weil says.

The man seemed offended that I'd rejected his ice. In England, when my husband requested ice, he was told, "It's bad for the digestion." The real reason was that they didn't happen to have any. Only the piggish Americans re-

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quested ice water in Europe at the time. Fortunately, we were driving a car with French license plates, so we brought no shame upon our country.

The only other beverage choice I saw at my neighbor's house was a spicy kind of V8, also in a plastic bottle. I checked the sodium count, which was around eight hundred. I should go home, I thought. From now on, I travel with Pellegrino in my pocket.

The regulars were pouring out whiskey for each other. A few ounces each, it looked like to me. In some Al-Anon literature I came across once, I'd read, "Don't count, don't watch the amount. It's not your problem." Then there was a motto: "You didn't cause it, you can't change it, you can't cure it," and some other useless claptrap for the person whose family member was addicted. It was like a bad little poem. The Al-Anon authors could have used some literary assistance.

"I have a joke for vegetarians," a red-faced man said after taking a gulp from his glass. I tried to prepare myself, but I'm never prepared for the people in our society. "If God didn't want us to eat animals, why did he make them out of meat?" he said proudly.

I pictured a cow. Then I pictured a deer, a duck, a rabbit. But I couldn't think of anything to say. I wanted to try a new version of my fake smile, the version that would show right away how fake it is, but I couldn't. "Oh," I said. They all went back to their merrymaking.

These people are confident. They don't need others to like their jokes or their menu plans. They have their own lives, they're not worried about every sentence, and, most important of all, they have their bottles, which were now on the table, right in the middle. I tried to get the gist of their conversation, but it wasn't exactly a conversation. There were no topics that I recognized. Global warming, asteroids crashing to earth—these did not come up. I thought I heard something to do with golf, but my brain doesn't process golf talk. Maybe this would be a good time to quote what Mark Twain said about golf. Probably not. Golfers don't like to hear it. But to hell with them, as my father liked to say about many things and people. "What is the purpose of a New Year's Eve party, or any

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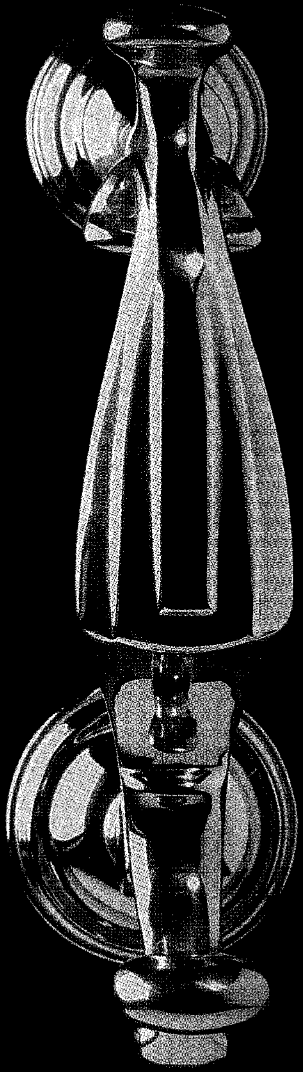

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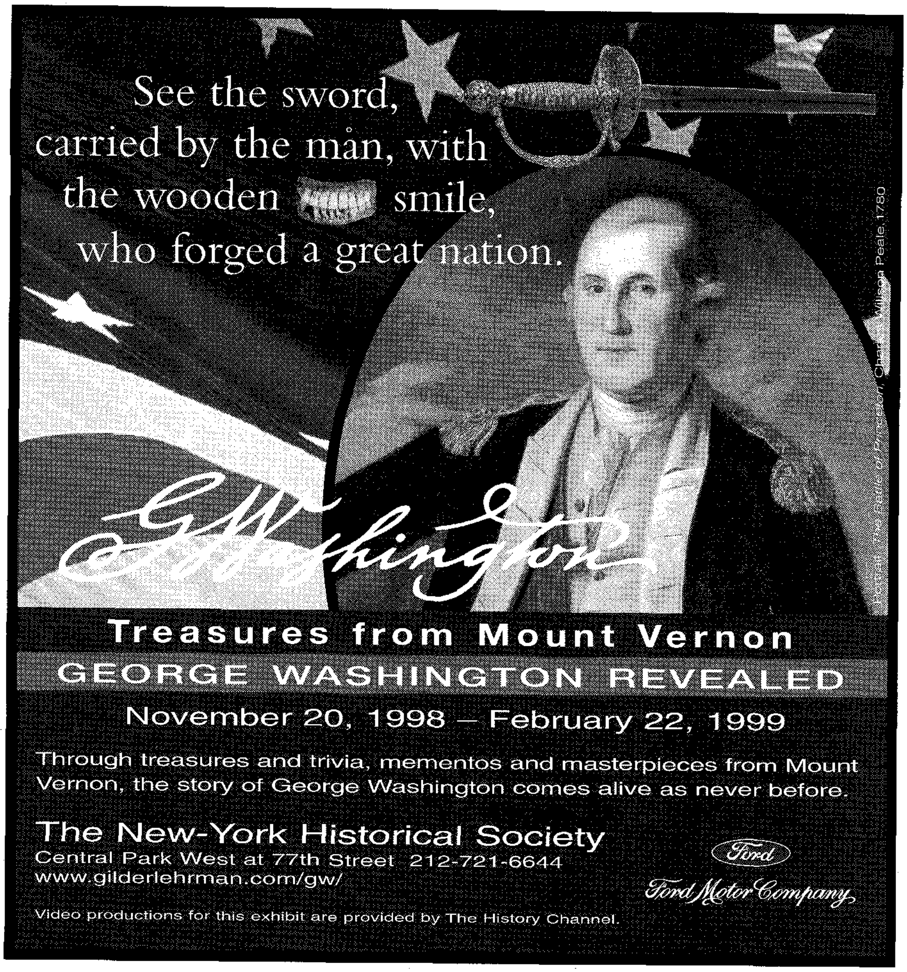
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kind of party, for that matter?" he said when I was thirteen.

It turns out that my father was right about all sorts of things. He disliked Christmas trees and celebrations of almost any kind. He might be pleased with the person I've become, but I'm not going over there. That's forbidden territory, the land of wishing my father and mother were alive.

My neighbor and I made a few stabs at conversation but soon realized the futility of it. What is the etiquette when a person can't hear? On one visit I tried writing things down after she said "What?" so many times. "Who rakes your leaves?" was my question, because the man who raked our leaves had a system of waiting until every last leaf was down. Did it occur to him to come to rake more than once? The fee is reasonable, and we would gladly have paid it.

I wrote his name down on a piece of scrap paper. "John Davis." Then I wrote, "Leaves." Then I wrote, "Lazy."

She got the picture. " 'Leaves. Lazy. John Davis.' I like the way that looks," she said, smiling happily. I liked the way it looked, too. But I hoped John Davis wouldn't find the paper blowing around outside.

"Here, take some cake with you when you go," a daughter-in-law said to me as

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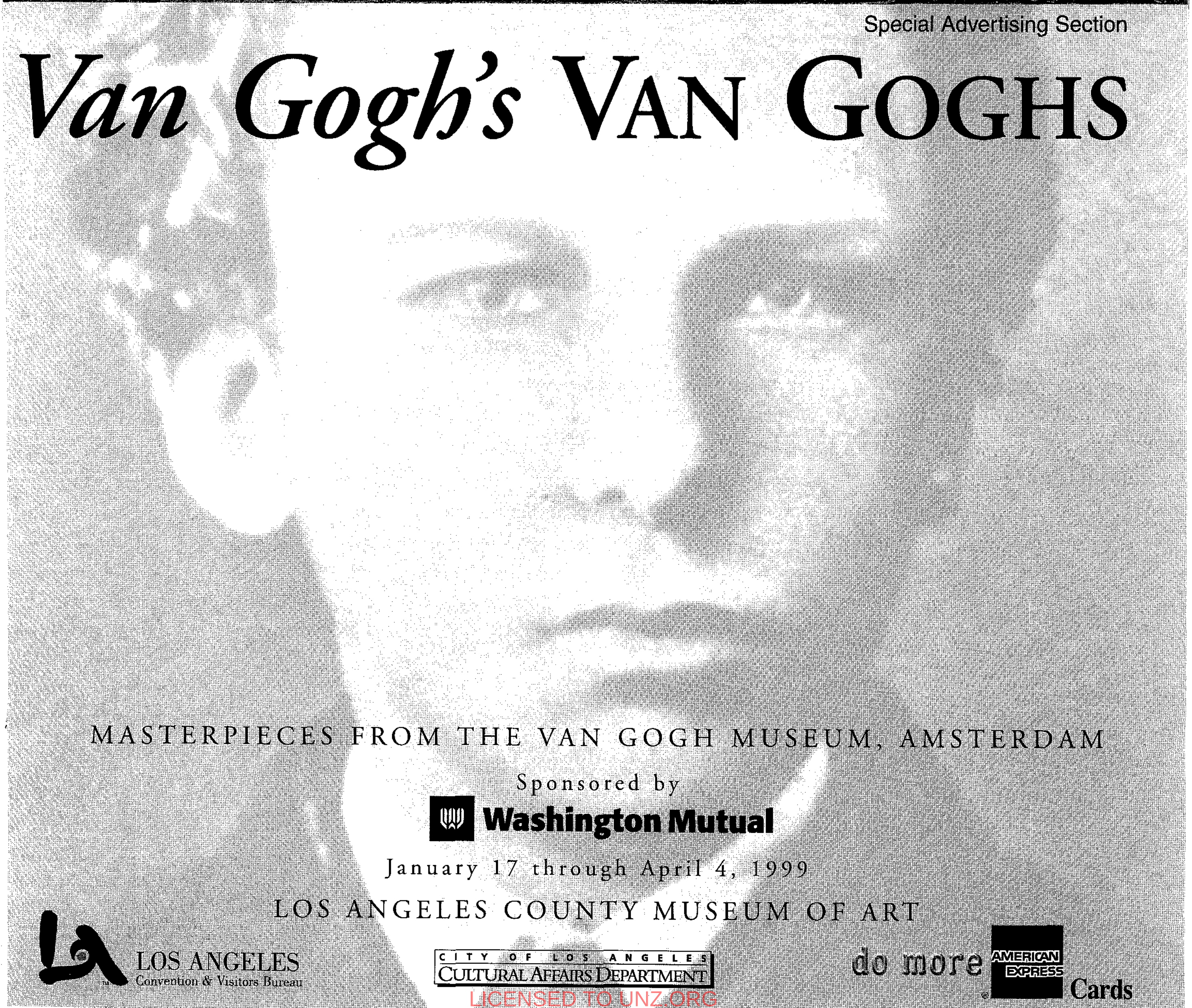

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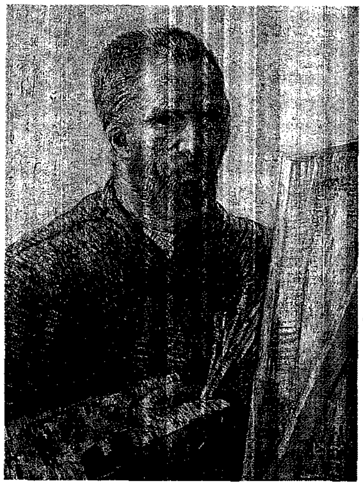

Self Portrait as an Artist, Winter 1887-88, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

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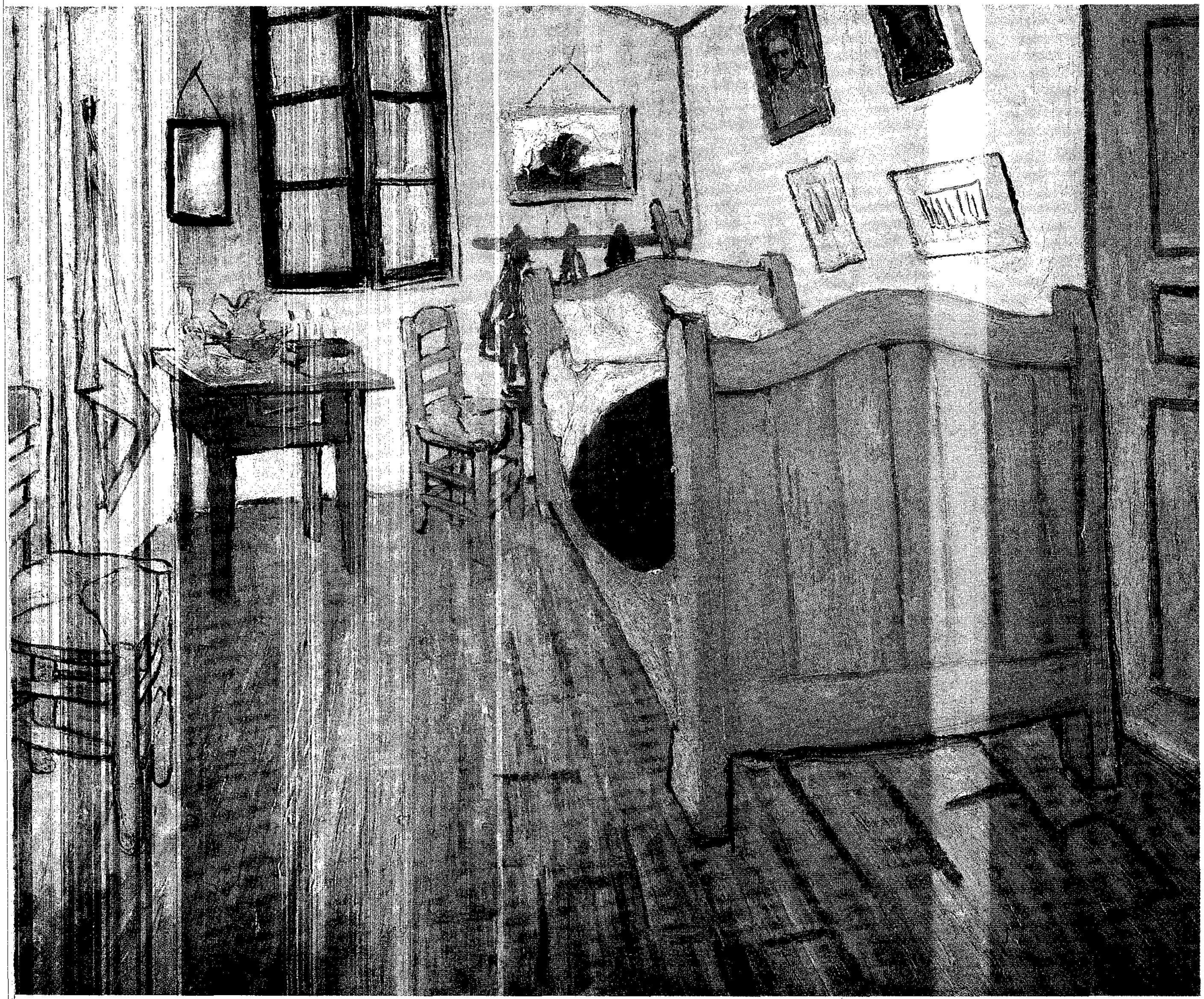
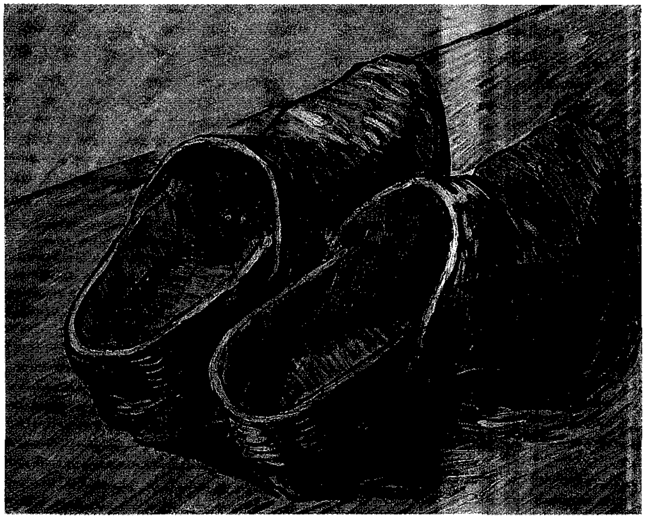


The Bedroom, October 1888, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

"One may have a blazing hearth in one's soul
and yet no one ever comes to sit by it. Passersby see
only a wisp of smoke rising from the chimney
and continue on their way."

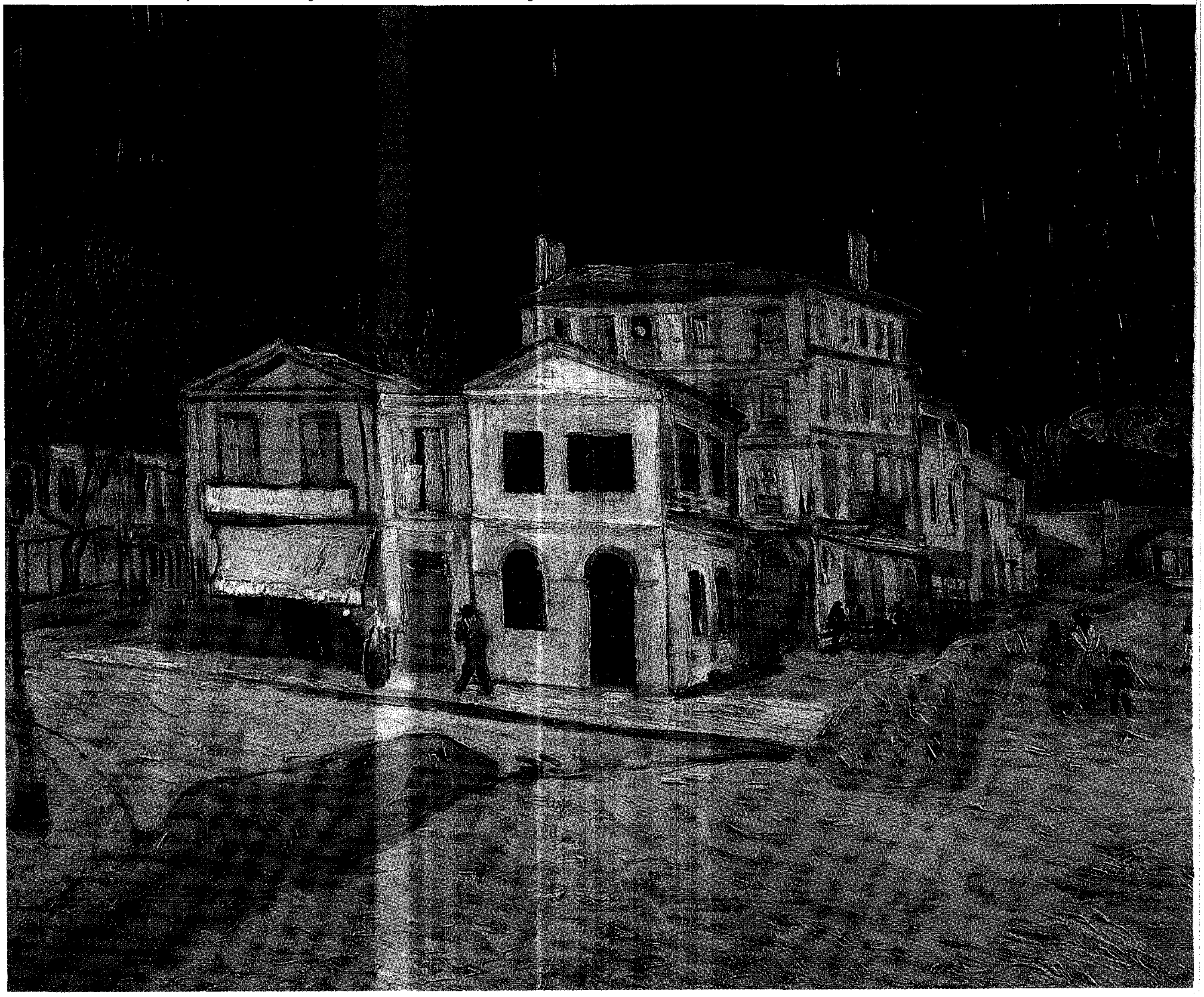
Vincent

A Pair of Leather Clogs, 1889, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

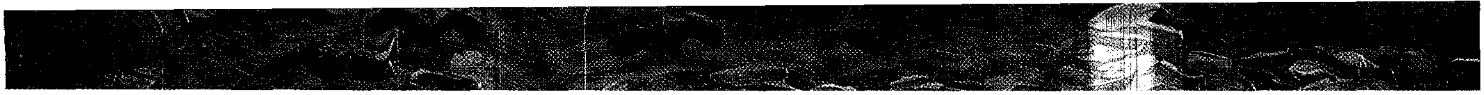


Vincent van Gogh died at the age of 37. His was one of the briefest careers in the history of art. He worked as an artist for only 10 years, but he was prolific and for weeks on end near the conclusion of his life he produced a canvas a day. Many of these paintings are considered masterpieces. Approximately 800 paintings and 900 drawings constitute the artist's legacy. During his lifetime he sold only one painting. He suffered greatly and on his deathbed stated, "But what's the use?"

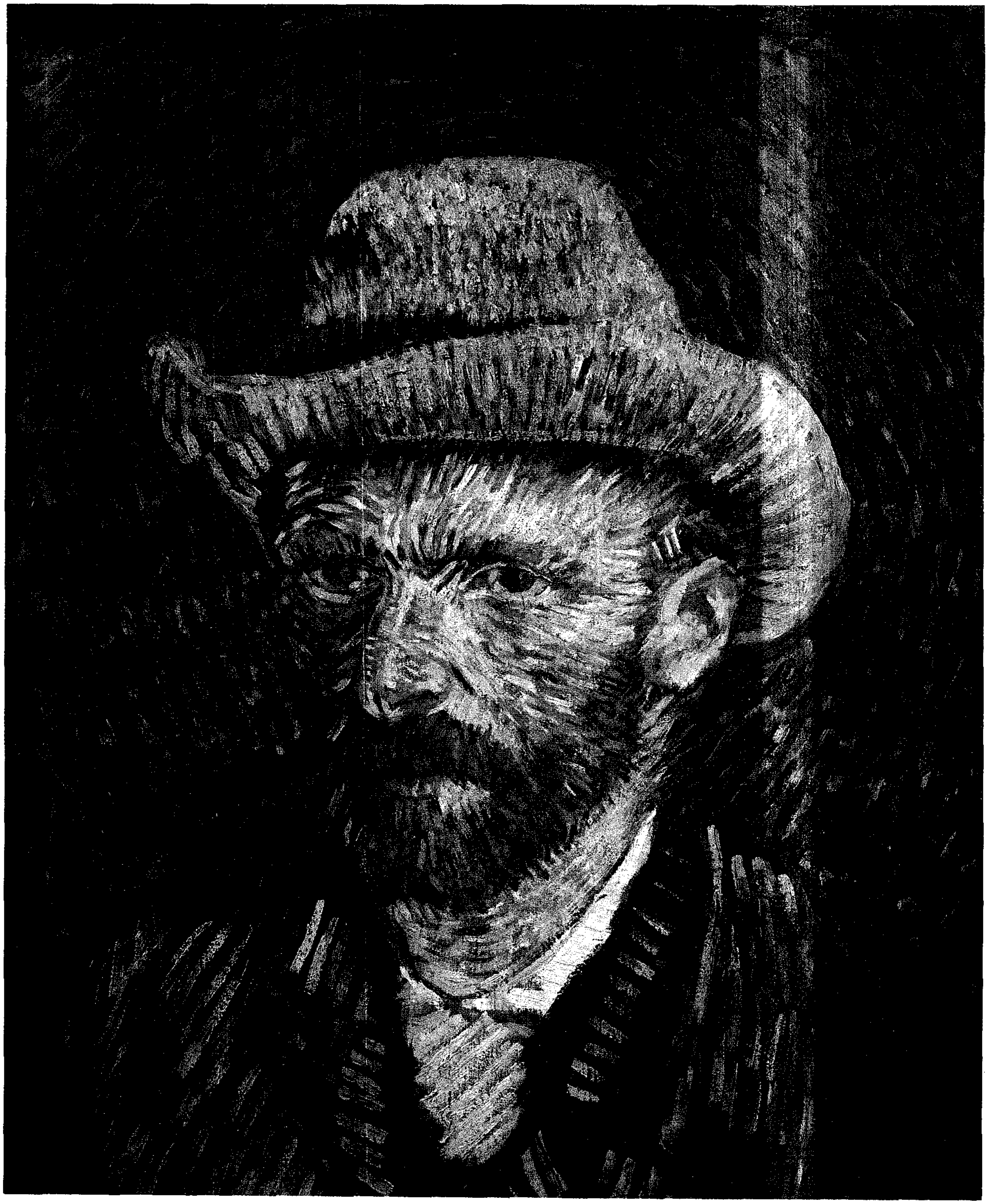
The Yellow House ("The Street"), September 1888, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Van Gogh's Van Goghs: Masterpieces from the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam was organized by the National Gallery of Art and the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, collaboration with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. It was supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.



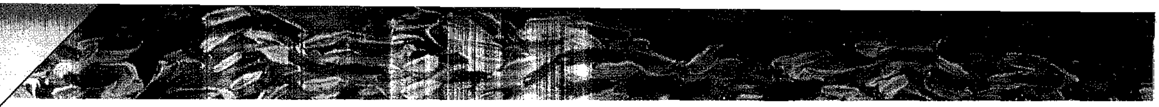
Self-Portrait with Felt Hat, Winter 1887-1888, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



"In a certain way I am glad that I have
not learned painting, because then
I might have learned to pass by
such effects as this"

Vincent

Free admission for 6,000 schoolchildren and additional busing assistance for this exhibition are made possible by Washington Mutual.
In-kind support for the exhibition in Los Angeles is provided by the Los Angeles Convention & Visitors Bureau.



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Purchase an exclusive Van Gogh Hotel Package by calling a participating hotel or your travel agent and receive:

- Tickets for the Van Gogh exhibition on the day of your choice (1 ticket per guest, based on double occupancy)
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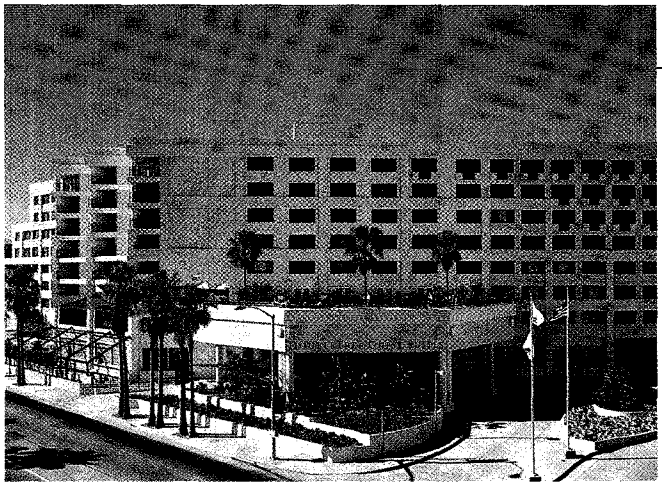
- Exclusive half-price tickets for the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Los Angeles Music Center
- American Express® Cardmembers special offer: 20% off the price of your third night stay at participating (*) hotels
- Additional amenities from individual hotels as described below (for hotel stays between January 14 and April 7, 1999):

EXTEND YOUR STAY

Experience the Los Angeles Impressionist and Post-Impressionist museum collections. In addition to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, major examples of Van Gogh and his contemporaries can be found at the J.Paul Getty Museum, UCLA at the Armand Hammer Museum of Art, the Norton Simon Museum and the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens. When making a reservation at one of the hotels listed below, ask for a copy of our three-day Los Angeles Van Gogh itinerary. You can also visit www.vangogh-la.com for the itinerary.



DOUBLETREE GUEST SUITES SANTA MONICA*

At the DoubleTree Guest Suites-Santa Monica, you'll find yourself just steps away from all the action on the Westside of Los Angeles with over 200 trendy shops and restaurants, including the Third Street Promenade, historic Santa Monica Pier and the glorious Pacific beaches just blocks from this hotel, which just completed a $6 million renovation. Guests will enjoy the outdoor pool and fitness center, along with a special brand of warm, friendly service. Spacious, brand-new two-room suites await you at Santa Monica's only full-service all-suite hotel.

Package includes: Breakfast buffet for two and free parking.

Rates: Weekday and Weekend price of $210/night
Additional night price of $159/night

To reserve your special package, call 310-395-3332.

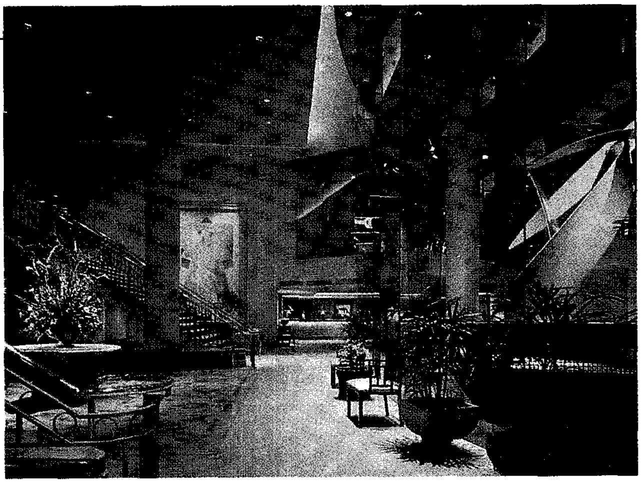
HOTEL INTER-CONTINENTAL*

A hub of art and sophistication in the midst of a bustling downtown, Hotel Inter-Continental Los Angeles fulfills the promise of its prime Bunker Hill address. The Hotel is a neighbor to the Museum of Contemporary Art, the L.A. Opera, the Ahmanson, Dorothy Chandler and Mark Taper theaters, and Los Angeles Philharmonic. Explore Chinatown or Little Tokyo in a complimentary chauffeur-driven car.

Package includes: 500 airline miles per stay, complimentary pass per guest to the Museum of Contemporary Art or Geffen Contemporary Museum, and the Japanese American National Museum. No additional room charge for children 17 and under. Extra adult, $40/night.

Rates: Weekday price of $215/night
Weekend (Sa/Su) price of $185/night

To reserve your special package, call 213-617-3300.



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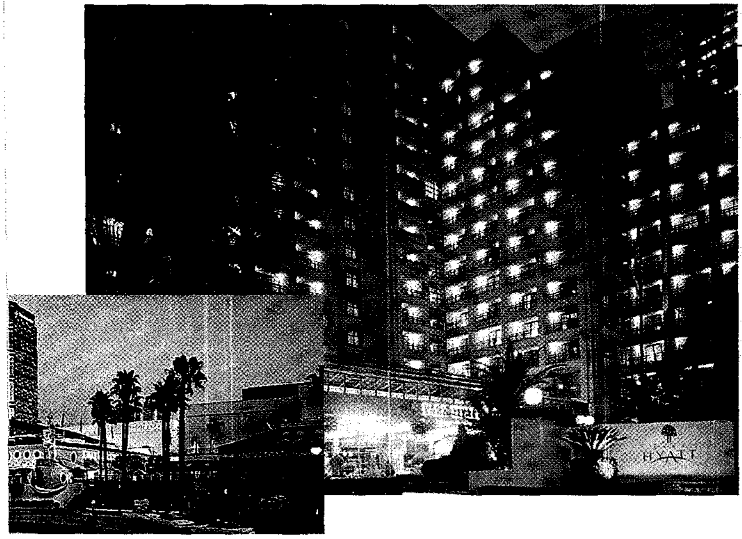


PARK HYATT LOS ANGELES

A favorite of celebrities and dignitaries, the Park Hyatt Los Angeles is one of the city's most elegant hotels, conveniently located just minutes from Century City Shopping Center, Beverly Hills, LAX, beaches and downtown. Features include luxury accommodations with first-class amenities and spectacular city views from private balconies and the award-winning Park Grill restaurant. Relax at the pools after visiting Century City Shopping Center, the ultimate outdoor shopping experience with 140 specialty stores and Bloomingdale's.

Package includes: Deluxe accommodations, $25 gift certificate at Park Grill, complimentary limousine service to and a special gift from Century City Shopping Center. Upgrade with consecutive three-night stay.

Rates: Weekday price of $289/night (extra night, $229)
Weekend (F/Sa) price of $249/night (extra night, $209)

To reserve your special package, call 310-277-1234.

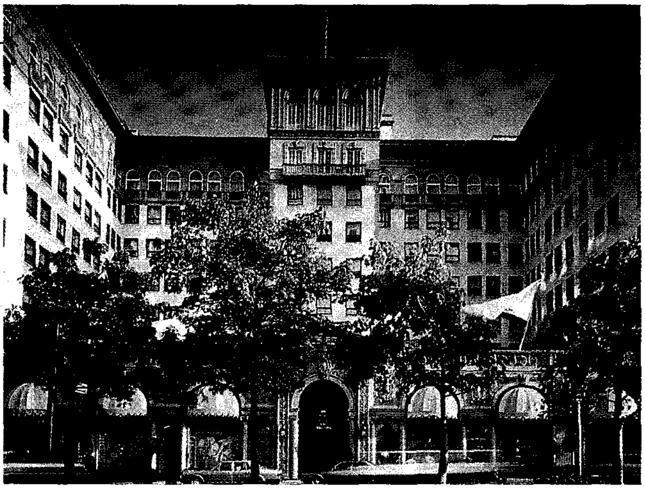
THE REGENT BEVERLY WILSHIRE*

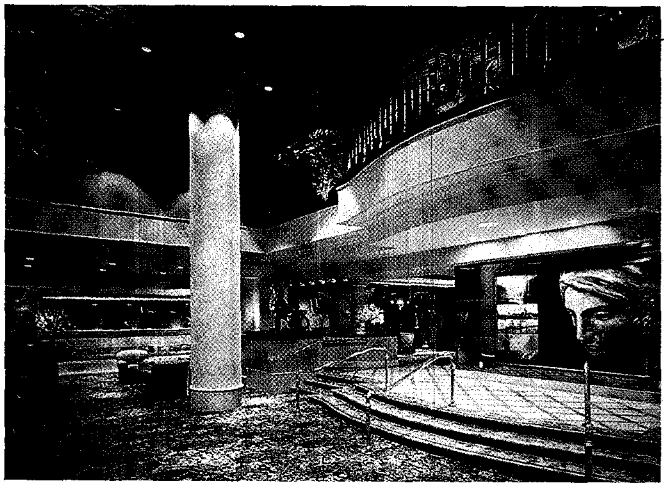
Enjoying one of the world's most famous locations, the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Rodeo Drive, The Regent Beverly Wilshire has been a favorite of visitors, from legendary film and music stars to crowned heads of state. Just steps from its door are some of the world's most exclusive shops, art galleries and restaurants. Inside this luxury hotel guests enjoy newly decorated guest rooms featuring a 24-hour personal room attendant, the latest in electronic capabilities and signature marble bathrooms with oversized showers and deep soaking bathtubs.

Package includes: Shopping certificates to Bloomingdale's and Saks Fifth Avenue with complimentary drop off and pick up (based on availability).

Rates: Weekday and Weekend prices beginning at $350/night
Additional night prices beginning at $295/night

To reserve your special package, call 800-427-4354.





RENAISSANCE LOS ANGELES HOTEL

The Renaissance Los Angeles Hotel, located near the Los Angeles Airport and close to the cultural centers in the region, offers the ultimate in luxury and convenience. From the lobby to the restaurants, the plush guest room furnishings, polished brass and mahogany appointments, along with a $14 million International Art Collection, demonstrate a commitment to world-class hospitality.

Package includes: Deluxe accommodations on the exclusive Renaissance Club Floor featuring panoramic views and use of the Club Lounge. Continental breakfast. Receive a suite upgrade when you pay for your stay with the American Express Card.

Rates: Weekday price of $165 (extra night, $109)
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SHERATON UNIVERSAL*

The Sheraton Universal Hotel is in Universal City, the heart of the entertainment community. Adjacent to Universal City Walk, L.A.'s eclectic entertainment, dining and shopping district, and Universal Studios Hollywood, you're just steps away from non-stop excitement. Centrally located, this hotel is freeway close to Hollywood, Downtown, the Getty Center and the Van Gogh exhibit in mid-Wilshire.

Package includes: One guest room, buffet breakfast for two in Californias Restaurant, discount coupons for tickets to Universal Studios Hollywood with complimentary shuttle transportation and 500 airline frequent flyer miles per stay.

Rates: Weekday price of $235/night (extra night, $175)
Weekend price of $220/night (extra night, $150)

To reserve your special package, call 818-509-0888.

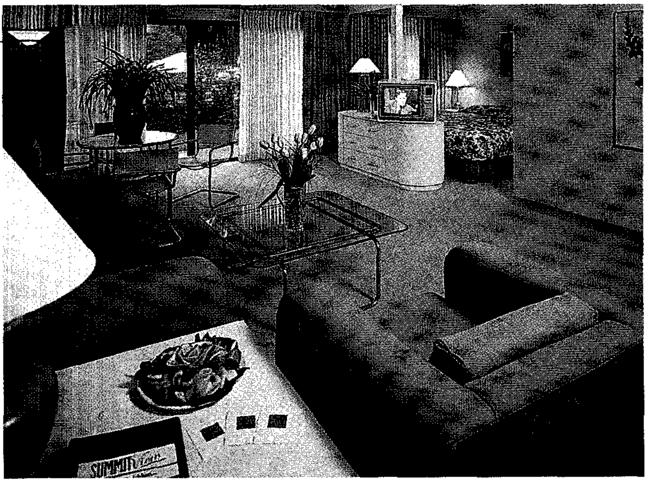
SUMMIT HOTEL BEL-AIR*

The Getty is *our* neighbor. Impeccable service, elegant accommodations and a civilized atmosphere await you at this luxurious eight-acre estate. Resting on the crest of a neighboring world of art galleries, dance, music and theater, the Summit Hotel is your cultural oasis in Los Angeles. Guests enjoy oversized guestrooms, alfresco dining, swimming pool, tennis court and a respite at the Summit Spa.

Package includes: Deluxe accommodations, California Summit breakfast and our welcome platter of wine and cheese. Reserve an additional night and enjoy complimentary transportation to the J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center.

Rates: Weekday price of $259/night (extra night, $189)
Weekend (F/Sa/Su) price of $259/night (extra night, $189)

To reserve your special package, call 800-HOTEL-411.



THE WESTIN BONAVENTURE*

Few hotels offer as many amenities and facilities as this architectural masterpiece and downtown landmark. The Westin Bonaventure Hotel and Suites' guests can enjoy a world-class spa, spacious outdoor deck and swimming pool, shopping and dining atrium, famed rooftop restaurant and much more. A just-completed renovation has given the hotel a fabulous new look.

Package includes: Guest room with citywide panoramas, American breakfast buffet in the lakeside lobby cafe, valet parking, and discount coupon book featuring the Bonaventure Spa, Bonaventure Brewing Company and many other hotel amenities.

Rates: Weekday and Weekend price of $195/night
Additional night price of $145/night

To reserve your special package, call 213-624-1000.

HOTEL PACKAGES DO NOT INCLUDE APPLICABLE TAXES. CST #1022318-10

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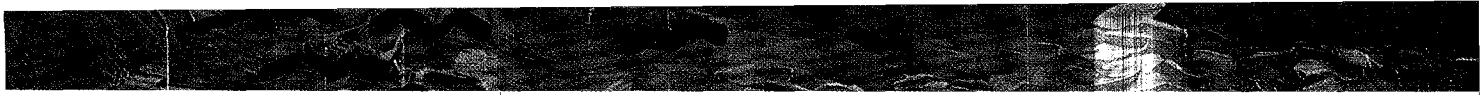

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DESTINATION L.A., the official visitor guide of the Los Angeles Convention & Visitors Bureau, is packed with essential vacation planning information:

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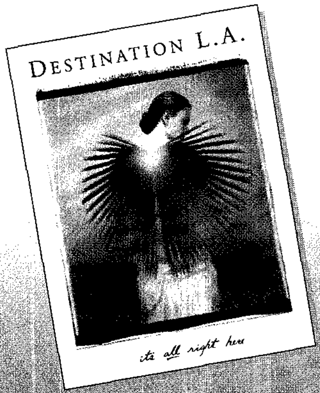

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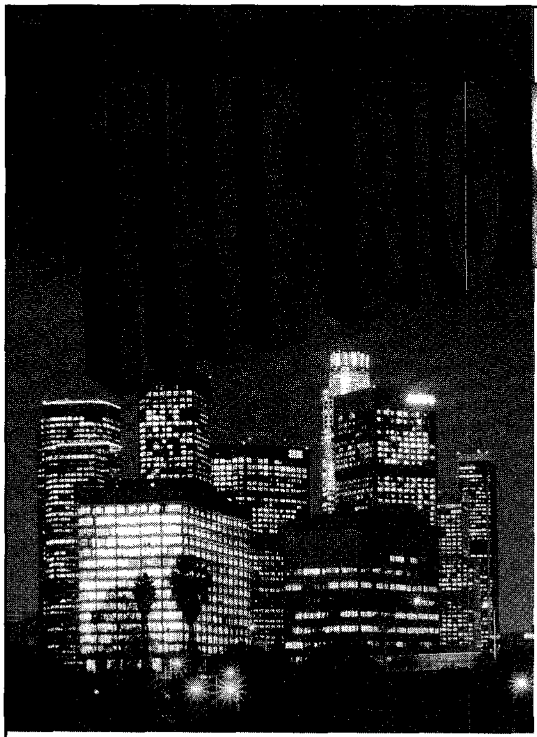

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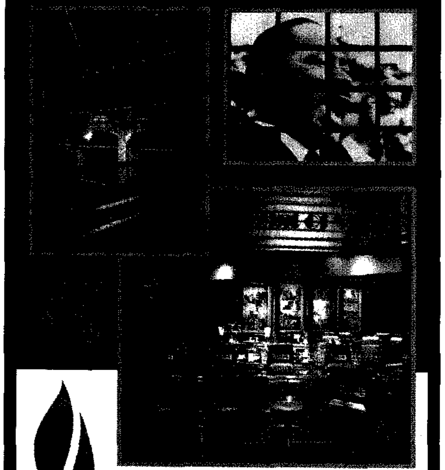

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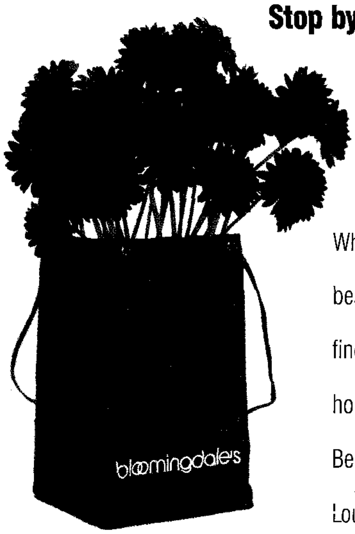

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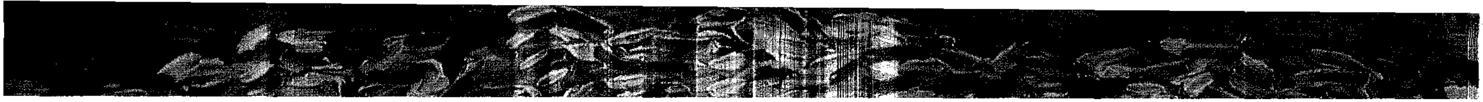


DISCOVER SANTA BARBARA

REFLECTING THE INSPIRATION AND VIVID HUES OF VAN GOGH'S WORK, SANTA BARBARA IS THE PERFECT GETAWAY— A SOPHISTICATED SOJOURN IN AN IDYLLIC SETTING.

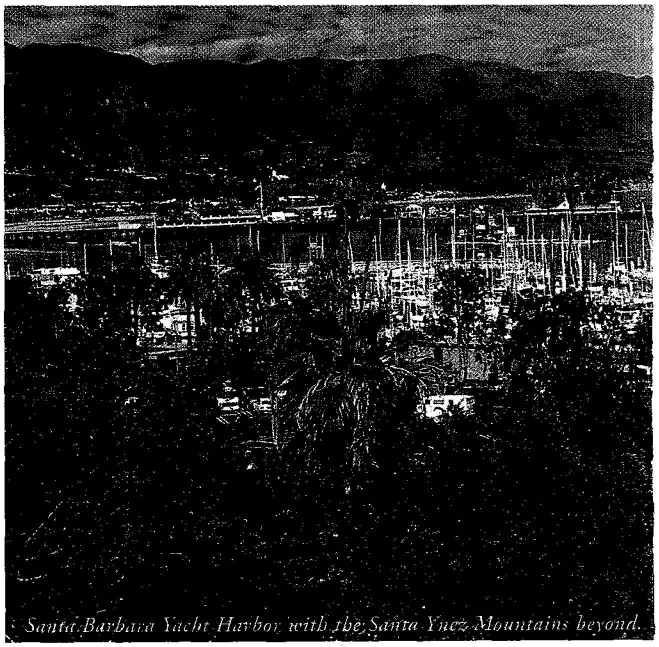
Set against the magnificent backdrop of the Santa Ynes Mountains, an easy 90-mile drive up the coast from Los Angeles, Santa Barbara is a mecca for art and culture, redolent with history and romantic ambience. Ever since the days when Yankee traders came calling on Spanish grandees in the early 1800s, visitors have been captivated by this "Paradise on the Pacific." First the wealthy came here for the curative mineral springs. Drawn by its perfect climate and inviting lifestyle, they returned to build the magnificent homes and buildings that have made Santa Barbara one of America's great architectural cities.

Here on the American Riviera, inspired horticulturists imported exotic species and planted luxuriant gardens. Today Santa Barbara boasts more than 46 parks, along with renowned gardens like Lotusland, Casa del Herrero and the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Orchid lovers can marvel at exotic blooms at some of the largest growers in the country.

A remarkable love affair with the arts is evident at more than 50 museums and galleries. The newly expanded Santa Barbara Museum of Art is considered one of the finest regional museums in the country,

The Moorish/Spanish-style Santa Barbara County Courthouse, where murals telling the story of the history of California adorn its interior.

Kirk Irwin



Santa Barbara Yacht Harbor with the Santa Ynez Mountains beyond.

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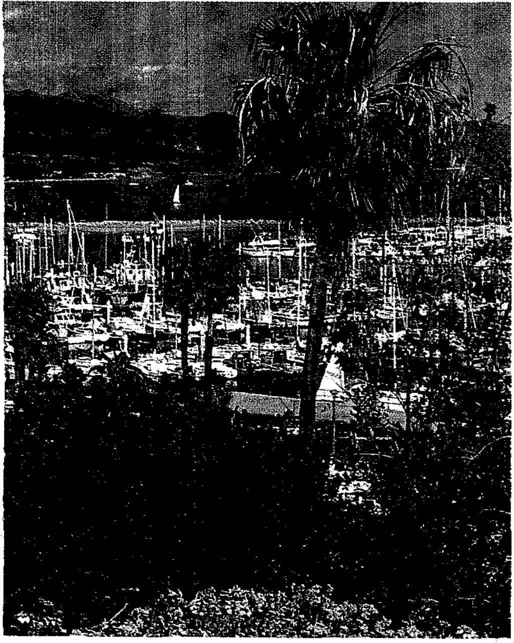
while the Contemporary Arts Forum, the Manné Gallery, the Santa Barbara Historical Museum and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History offer exceptional exhibitions. Treasure hunters will find a marvelous collection of antique stores as well.

A variety of theaters provide venues for more than 200 annual stage productions including, musicals, dance, theater, opera and classical and popular music. A profusion of festivals such as the historic Old Spanish Days, the exuberant Summer Solstice, the popular International Film Festival, and the colorful I Madonnari Italian Street Painting Festival round out this cultural enclave.

Santa Barbara's wonderful restaurants add delightful tastes to its cosmopolitan pleasures. Innovative chefs make magic with a bounty of marvelous fresh local produce and seafood. And more than 40 local wineries offer a rewarding inducement for exploring the county's growing world-class wine region. For body, mind and inspiration, the Santa Barbara experience is indeed a rich one.



Kirk Irwin

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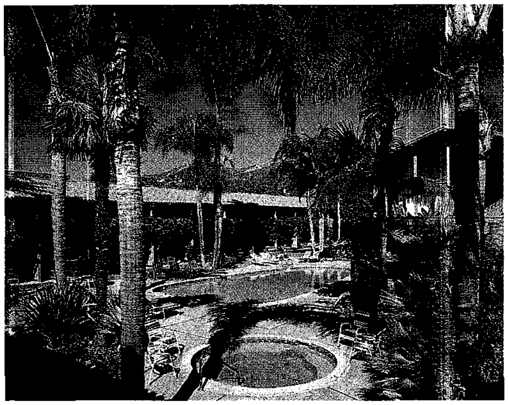

Best Western Pepper Tree Inn

The Pepper Tree Inn is a charming Spanish-style mini-resort located on upper State Street, across from an open-air shopping plaza. Relax in beautifully decorated rooms overlooking our garden courtyards with pools and whirlpools. Enjoy sauna, fitness/massage facilities, K's Restaurant/Lounge or discover nearby attractions, sidewalk cafes and beaches.

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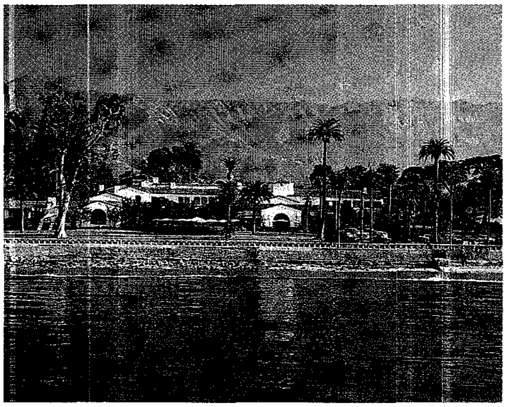

Four Seasons Biltmore

Overlooking the Pacific Ocean, the Four Seasons Biltmore is one of the premier resorts on the West Coast, offering 217 guest rooms, suites and cottages on twenty acres of lush gardens. Enjoy two pools, three tennis courts, two complete health clubs with spa services, preferred tee times at three nearby championship golf courses, and panoramic ocean views from three resort restaurants.

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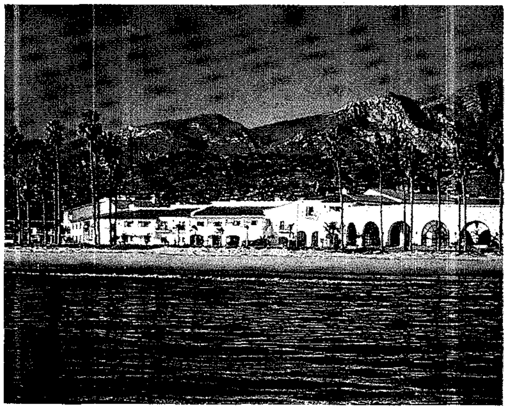

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I got up. "Even though you won't eat it."

"She can give it to her husband," my neighbor said. How did she hear that?

My voice is always blamed as the reason the deaf can't hear. I did once consult a deaf psychoanalyst who wore a hearing aid and rapped and tapped it angrily whenever I spoke. The idea was that you had to scream out your problems, even though it wasn't scream therapy or anything like that. "Your voice is too soft," the referring doctor said when I told her what had happened. "I've never had any problem with her," she added as a special touch. Typical.

The daughter was slicing a piece of cake and saying, "We covet this, so I'm giving you a small piece." The word "covet" was not quite correct, but instead of mentioning it I said, "That's too big."

"Her husband can eat the cake," my neighbor said.

I pictured my husband eating the cake for breakfast, as is his custom, if he sees any cake, and I pictured the ingredients and all the other ingredients he'd eaten in his life of forty-nine years—mayonnaise, pâté, eggs and bacon, chips fried in cottonseed oil, roast beef, white bread, Jell-O—and I imagined him dead, myself alone without him. I couldn't visualize it.

My neighbor came over and opened up the sample of bread I'd brought. "It looks kind of dark and dry. You have to use a real oven," she said. "She tries to bake this in a toaster oven," she explained to the group whose attention was elsewhere.

"Try toasting it," I said in a loud voice.

"Oh, toasting it," she said. "I know that. I'm the one who started this whole thing, remember?"

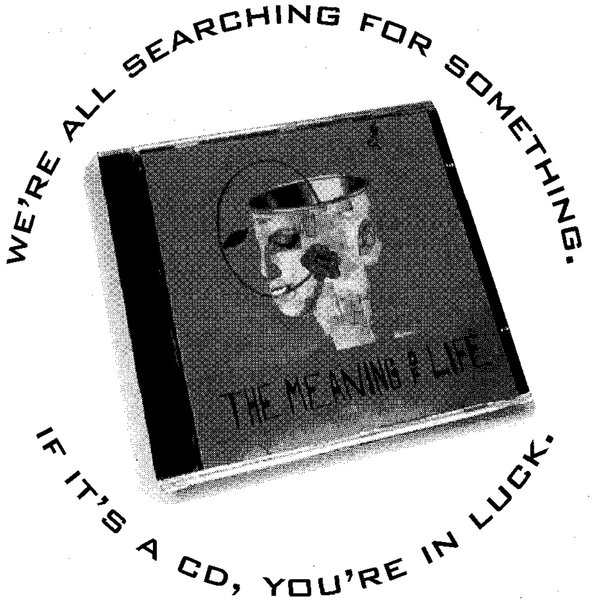
"We put all those bad things in to keep it nice and moist," the daughter-in-law said.

"It's the oldness of the oven," I said. "I think I've mastered the texture with soy milk and ground flax seeds."

"It's the husband's fault," someone said. Then I heard what used to be called a guffaw.

"He needs more ginkgo!" the red-faced man shouted.

I must say, I was impressed that such a man was acquainted with ginkgo, the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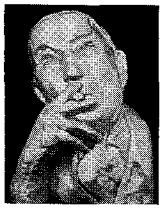

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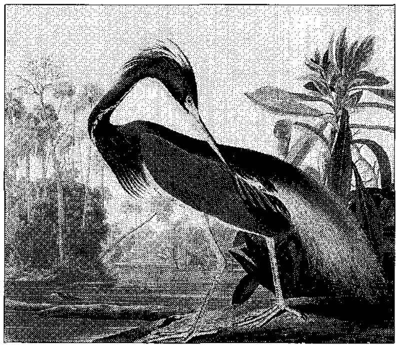

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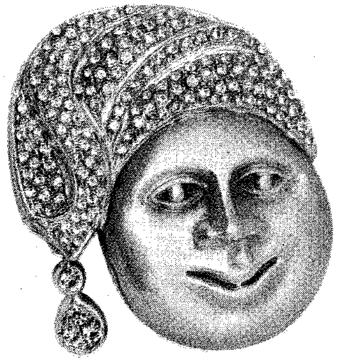

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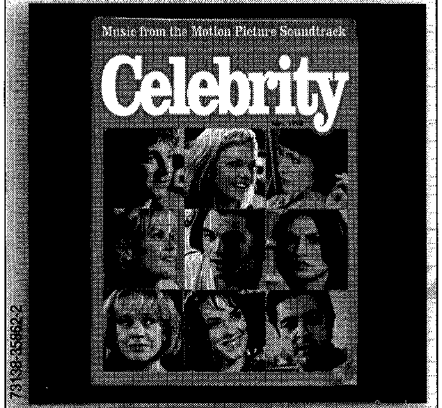

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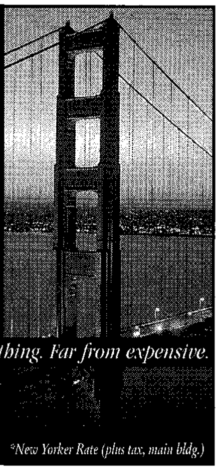

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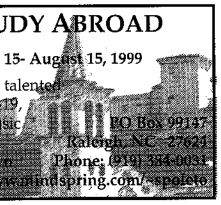

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brain and memory stimulant. On the other hand, ginkgo and garlic have been trickling down to the pharmacy level for quite some time. That's the real "trickle-down effect," in my opinion.

"More ginkgo for everyone," someone said.

"And less drinko," I dared to say. I didn't bring up the Mark Twain sentence about golf. I kept that to myself.

"Right. Less drinko!" someone else said. Then the guffaw again.

"WE have to take the ham out soon," my neighbor said to her children.

A ham had been baking in my presence, I suddenly realized. This was the reason I'd never asked to bake my cranberry bread in their oven. An Orthodox rabbi would have to give a million instructions before the oven could be used. A Buddhist monk might have an idea of what to do. I wish I could find a religion that combines Buddhism, Judaism, and the good parts of Christianity. I was told that a stove could be sandblasted to be made fit for use by Orthodox Jews. The same must go for stoves for vegans. "The most Orthodox rabbis in Jerusalem are vegetarians," I'd read. But I could never find a sandblaster to come and take our old stove apart. This had been the path to the inappropriate use of the toaster oven. But how would my neighbor ever be able to hear all that?

IT was just a few days later that I got another call about the amaryllis blooming, again with the opening phrase "All right, I'll leave a message." Before that, I'd got a message from her saying, "Here's my critique of the cranberry bread: Too heavy and undercooked inside. Come on over when you can."

I tried the bread again. I used a timer—my husband was out of the picture for helping. This time it was the right color and it looked like the real thing. I couldn't wait to get her opinion of it.

My neighbor was alone except for the dog and cat. I could see her through the window. She was poking at a potato in the toaster oven. "Come in, come in, come in," she said. "Don't let the cat out."

I took off my jacket. Then I took off

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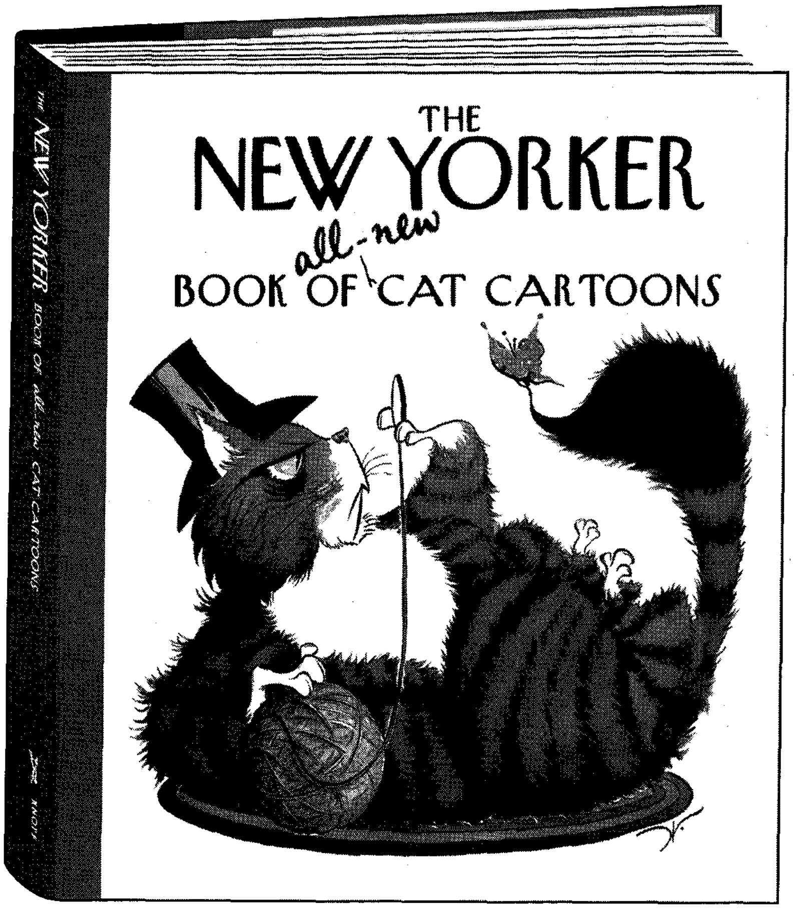
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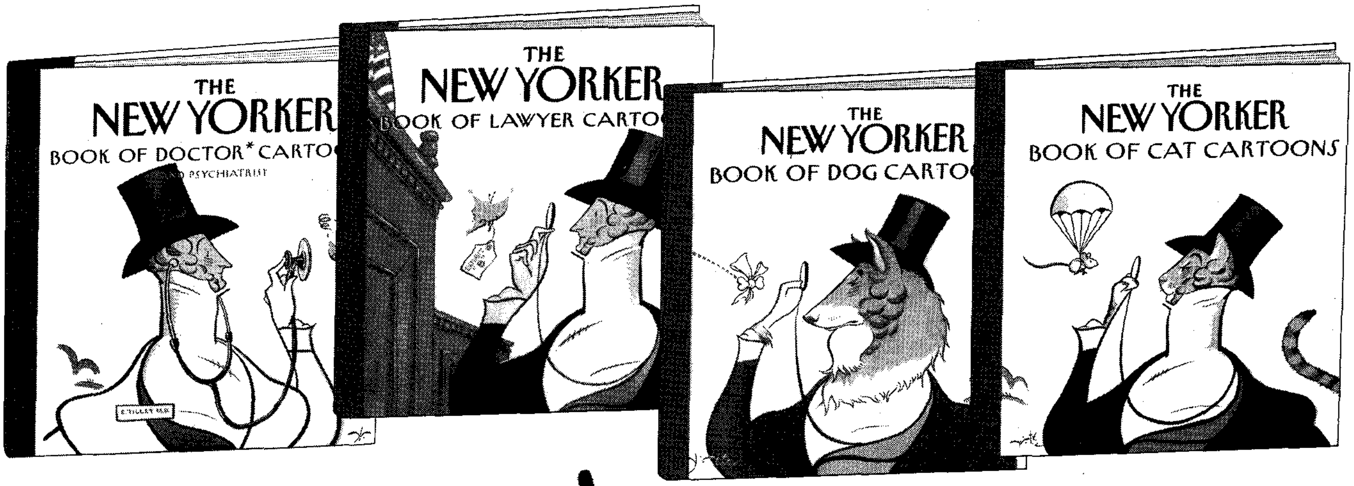
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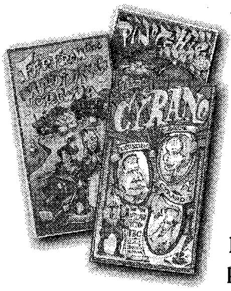


the pile lining. Then I took off my sweater and a shoulder pad fell out.

"What's that, a false bosom?" she said.

"Are you drunk?" I asked. "It's a false shoulder."

"Who cares about a big bust?" she said.

"I'd rather have big shoulders," I said.

"They say when you get to middle age, the bust enlarges," she said.

"Oh, no! Why not the shoulders?"

"The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away," my neighbor said. This would be a good time to smile, I thought.

"Blessed be the name of the Lord," she said.

"Here, try this cranberry bread." I handed it to her.

"Let's see that," she said. "Oh, that's better. I can tell by the color."

My neighbor was lucky that her cataract surgery had been successful. Many old people are not so lucky. She could be even luckier if she'd get a hearing aid. But I'm not going to tell her that. Even if I did, she wouldn't be able to hear me say it. I've asked her children about it—they're my age, I figure I can talk to them, in spite of the golf and the ham. "That's the way she is, we can't change her" is what they say, or something like that. You could spend your whole life talking to the children of old people about how to help them.

My neighbor had a helper for a while, but they didn't hit it off. That's often the case. "She couldn't even identify a robin. I can't have someone like that around," she'd told me.

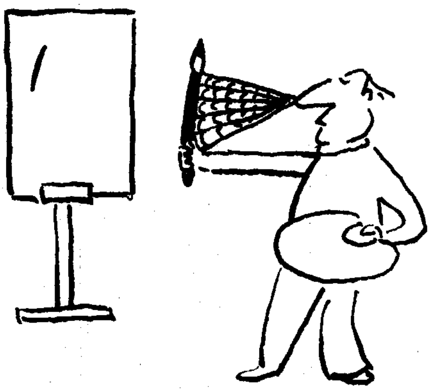
"I was going to leave you a message," she said. "'Stop trying to bake the bread. It isn't working.'"

"I think I have it now," I said.

"Come on, let's sit in the living room. I've already missed 'Jeopardy.'"

I followed her and sat down on the same sofa with her and the cat.

The cat was as big as a raccoon. I



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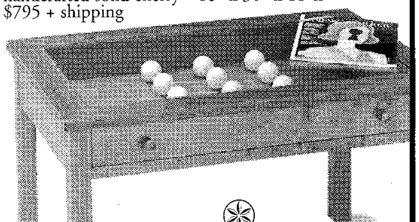

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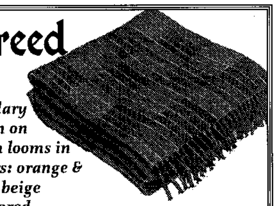

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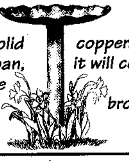

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tried touching him. He looked surprised, but I kept it up. I'd read that petting cats and dogs lowers one's blood pressure. But my blood pressure is low enough. I hope my blood pressure doesn't get too low from the petting of the cat, I was thinking. It wouldn't be good if I keeled over in a faint.

We should get a cat, I thought. Or a dog. I'd like a few of each. I'd like pets, parents, children, cousins, aunts, uncles. I'd like to be back in my childhood with all of these. I'm allergic to cats, but I recently read that there's a way to make them hypoallergenic.

"He's getting fat," my neighbor said. "He gets no exercise."

That must be where the term "fat cat" came from. It had just occurred to me.

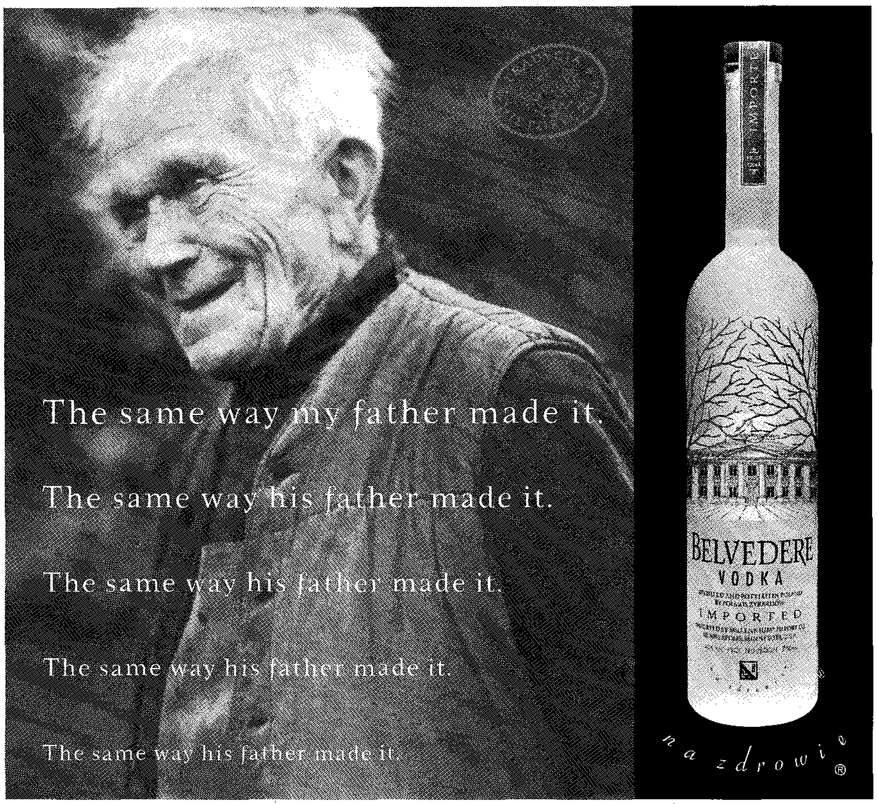
The cat stretched out in a crazy way. His midsection was huge. He looked like a cat pillow I'd seen in a toy catalogue. After the stretching was over, I tried touching his head. "Why are you doing this?" was his attitude. I got up and went over to sit on the other sofa so I could have a better view of the animal's face. I was thinking about touching his head again. Also, there was only one lamp on in the whole room, and I thought that if my neighbor could see my face the lip-reading could take place.

"Is it O.K. to put the light on?" I said.

"Why, do you like a lot of light?" she asked.

I felt as if we were in Poland, but the company was too privileged and the furniture too fine. On the bookcase next to the antique kerosene lamp I'd turned on, there were about fifty photos in frames. I always wanted to take a photo of these photographs. The people were all good-looking and seemed to be having fun. It wasn't a Polish atmosphere. They were skiing, dancing, graduating from Harvard. This is my neighbor's family. Sometimes she tells me the story connected with each photo. They're interesting stories, too. Not that interesting. Last year, I had to stop looking at these pictures. I felt too sad. Why aren't I part of a big happy family? I couldn't help wondering. I once heard a psychologist say, "Everyone wants to be part of a big happy family. At Christmastime, the feeling is more extreme." Probably Rilke or Nietzsche had said it better.

Then the dog came in and looked at us. "The dog is as old and arthritic as I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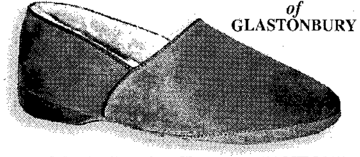

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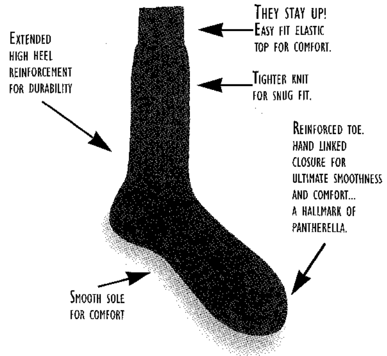
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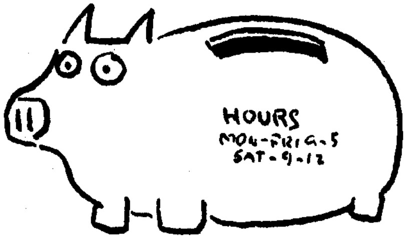
am," my neighbor said. "We're just padding around together, limping through the best we can. Aren't we, Jim?"

To tell the truth, I feel like crying when I see this dog. He has trouble walking and lurches around. This is why I don't have a dog. As my father said when we tried to get him a dog, "No, thank you, I don't want to lose anyone else." I hadn't thought about that at the time. There were so many things I didn't understand. "You little fool!" I often say to myself, the way actors say it to each other in movies from the thirties and forties.



"I SHOULD go home," I said as loudly as I could. I got up and walked toward the kitchen. As a form of sign language, I reached for my jacket. It was a Barbour jacket, the kind Prince Charles wears on the Scottish moors.

"My nephew wears that for hunting," she said. "Men. Men and their fishing and their hunting and their boats." She shook her head. "They're cooking some ducks they shot. They skinned them pretty neatly, I hope," she added.

"I can't listen to that," I said as a hint.

"I just cook vegetables for myself nowadays," she said. "I'd never eat duck. Pretty rich, I imagine," she added with revulsion. "Do you ever eat a baked potato? You don't have to worry about starches."

"It's my face I have to worry about. This whole area is starting to go," I said, touching one of the worst parts.

"Look at mine," she said. "Age. The skin sags, the fat comes, the veins show." She touched her hands. The veins showed, but the hands looked good to me. She picked up a fork in one of those hands and tried to stick it into the potato on her plate. The potato skin was hard and I was afraid she might stab herself with the fork.

"Why don't you use a knife?" I said right into her hearing space.

"You're not supposed to use a knife on a baked potato," she said.

There was always something to

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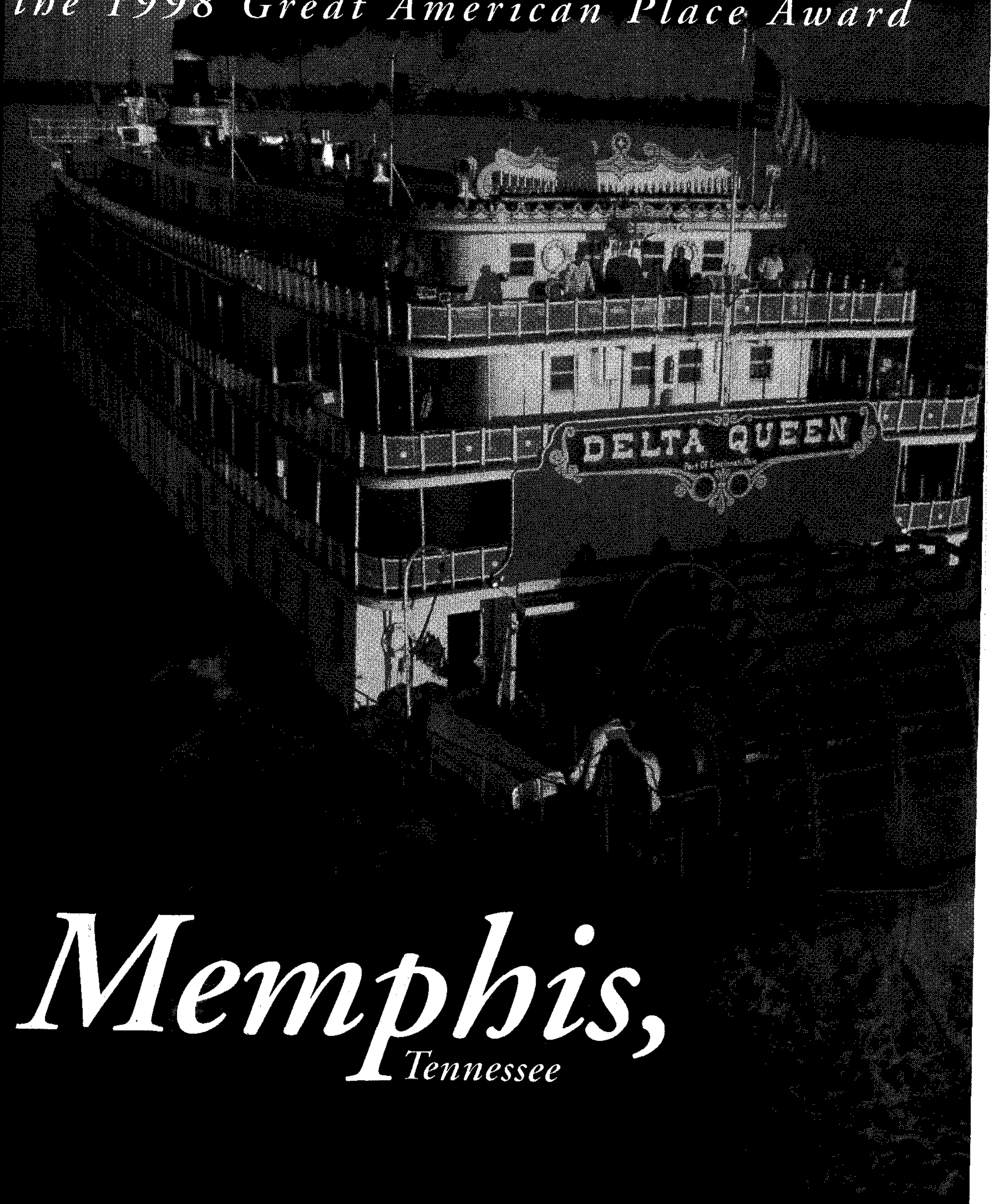

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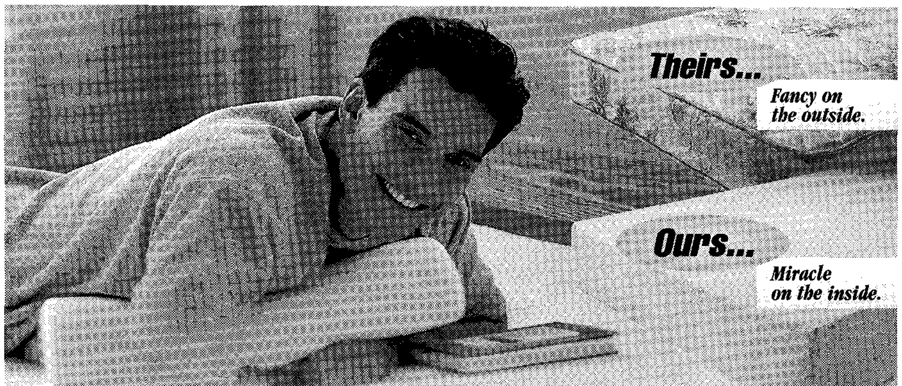
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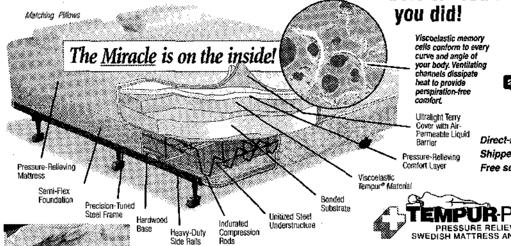
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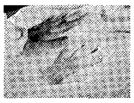

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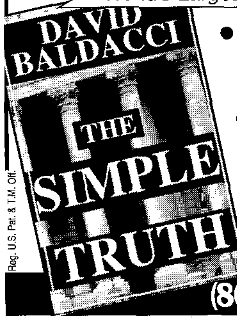
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learn. I learned something every time I went over there.

"I'm not supposed to have butter, but at my age, what the hell," she said, digging out some butter with the fork.

"Why don't you use olive oil?" I asked.

"I'm not in the mood for olive oil, that's why! At my age, I can do what I want. Here, take a taste of this," she said, offering me a spoon.

I tried to get some potato without the butter, although I'd like to taste some butter now and then. "The Chinese and Japanese don't use butter and they don't mind," I said.

"You're American!" my neighbor shouted. "You can have a bit of butter."

I tasted the potato. It was pretty good. In fact, it was the best potato I'd ever tasted. I had to resist the urge to grab it and gobble it down, butter and all. Instead I reached into the pocket of my jacket, the "game pocket," intended for ducks, etc., and took out my Pellegrino bottle. I'd read about a model who said she drank water whenever she was hungry. Then I read a book called "Your Body's Many Cries for Water: You Are Not Sick, You Are Thirsty!" The latter was my influence.

I walked over to the door. The cat was watching me. I could tell he wanted me to leave. The dog, too.

"Oh, wait, I want you to taste this," my neighbor said.

"Do I have to?" I said in a normal voice. Now, that's one advantage of talking to the hard of hearing. You can say whatever you want. It would be just my luck that she'd hear that one sentence.

"I want you to see how sweet this is," she said. "It's the baked ham from Christmas."

"But I'm a vegetarian," I said. I didn't even yell.

"I know, but this is better than most," she said. "It's not salty the way ham can be."

I pictured a pig I saw in a documentary about the high intelligence of pigs and the reasons people keep them as pets. One woman said she preferred the pig's company to her husband's. In the era when men were called chauvinist pigs, it was actually an insult to the pigs.

"I'm just having a little bit," she said, carving off some pieces. Then she took her plate and shuffled across the kitchen to an easy chair in the dining part of the room. She turned around and fell into the chair. "There," she said as if she were surprised by the landing. The dog was asleep in front of her. The cat was gone.

"Do you want me to turn on CNN?" I asked in my loudest voice.

"No, I hate television," she said. "I'm just going to sit here and have dinner."

But I didn't see how she could just sit and have dinner facing a doorway. No person, no TV news, no book. What about feng-shui was my other notion. I'd never seen either of my parents dining alone without reading. They had book holders to support the book in front of them.

At the beginning of the end for my father—but then isn't birth the beginning of the end?—I arrived late for a visit with him. My father no longer understood the rush hour, and the fact that it would take me the whole day to get to his house by six o'clock. He had started his lonely dinner and was reading while eating, with a small cheap plastic radio I'd never seen before on the table in front of him. He was listening to an NPR news program. The sight of this radio and this book holder and this plate with only a piece of fish and a slice of bread, without salad or vegetables—this just broke my heart. But I didn't let myself know that my heart was broken. Instead I was annoyed.

My father could have had a snack and waited for me to make my trip across Long Island. A thoughtless idea on my part. That was the right time to have worked on him to move out to live near us. Right next door, or around the corner. He and my neighbor could have been friends. They both did crossword puzzles. I can't imagine why. Don't we have enough on our minds without trying to figure out which word fits where? When I brought up the subject of moving, my father said, "Let's wait and see how I age." But by the time you see, the person can't be moved.

"This is the way I have my dinner when the family is gone," my neighbor said.

"Well, O.K.," I said. Then I flashed her that fake smile I'm using all the time, and I said, "*Bon appétit!*"

She heard me, too. She smiled back. "Oh," she said. "As Julia Child used to say."

"Right you are," I said. I'd forgotten about that. ♦

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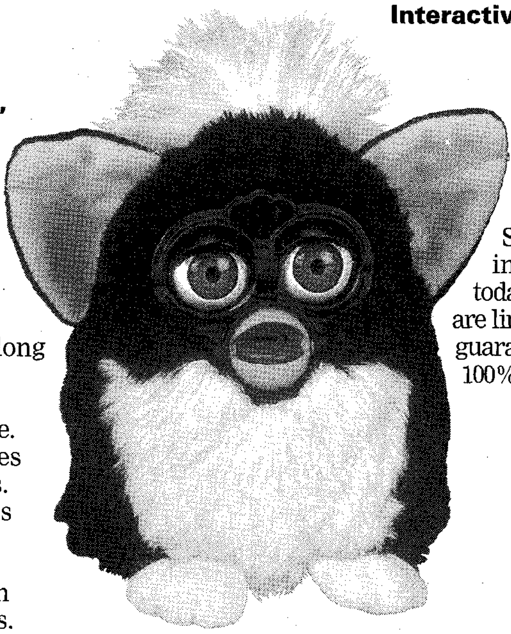

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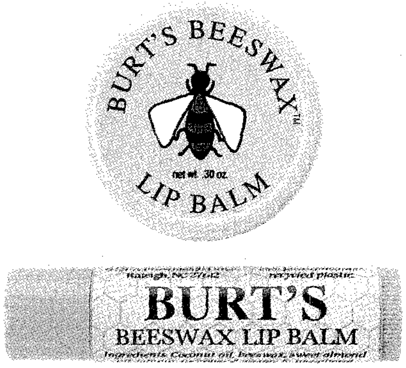

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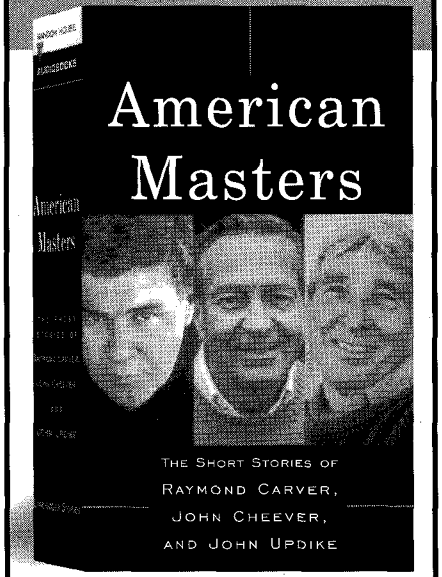
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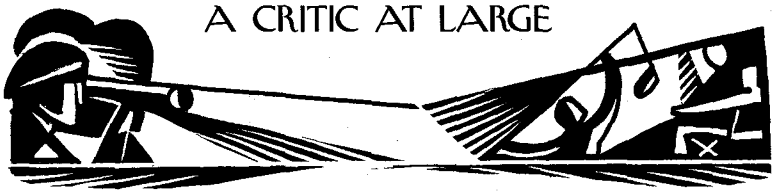

NO EXODUS

If Moses never lived, why can't we live without him?

BY DAVID DENBY

“THE PRINCE OF EGYPT,” the new animated musical feature from DreamWorks, is perhaps the first major work of art or entertainment to turn Moses—*the* Moses, the big guy—into a noisy American teen-ager. Accompanied by Rameses, his “brother,” young Moses goes hot-rodding around Egypt's construction sites in his chariot, drops water balloons on the indignant heads of temple priests, and utters such locutions as “Hey, Rameses, how'd you like your face carved on a wall?” Commercial culture dissolves everything, even Biblical narrative: never mind that Moses is without doubt the most famously *grown-up* grownup in all history, the most patriarchal of patriarchs. Here he comes off as a sand-blown Prince Hal—a scamp who has Greatness Within.

But then popular culture has long found the West's lawgiver and leading anti-sensualist a daunting figure, both alluring and elusive. The last major Moses movie, Cecil B. De Mille's 1956 epic, “The Ten Commandments,” was religio-erotic kitsch, solemn and lascivious, with idolatrously gleaming sets and a God who speaks from the burning bush but sounds like a wind tunnel. It is an irresistible, terrible movie. De Mille used sex to reject sex: in Pharaoh's palace, Nefretiri (Anne Baxter), unhappily married to Rameses (Yul Brynner, of the concupiscent baldness), throws herself at his rival, moaning “Mohh-ses . . . Mohh-ses.” A hot, scheming woman, she wants her own Promised Land even more than the Hebrews want theirs, and it seems ungallant of Moses (Charlton Heston) not to give it to her. For years, Nefretiri sustains the competition between the two men, and the movie turns into a struggle between two chests, the hairy muscular chest (Heston) and the smooth muscular chest (Brynner). The hairy guy wins: Moses' closeness to the Lord is measured by the progressive length and whiteness of Charlton Heston's beard. In the recent imagery devoted to Moses, the thick, forbidding beard has signified the sublimation of eros, though to the tribesman of the desert it probably signified the opposite—possession of women. Michelangelo certainly brought the Mosaic beard to a full, curling, almost disturbing virility. His rendering of the prophet exudes both moral and erotic power.

Michelangelo makes his own rules. For lesser mortals, an odd and vexing problem remains: how do you represent a man who in the Western imagination stands for the hatred of representation? The second of the Ten Commandments that Moses carries down from the mountaintop forbids the making of graven images; it also forbids “any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” Even if the meaning of the commandment is principally religious—you shall not depict God in the form of an animal or a man—it must bring a flutter to the heart of any artist who wants to represent Moses himself.

Yet again and again, in movies, in operas, and in books both popular and scholarly, the very invisibility of the Old Testament God has served as a license to depict his most celebrated earthly representative. A dangerous business: Any artist or scholar working with Moses must pitch his tent in a wilderness of speculation. For what the Bible says about Moses is fragmentary and inconsistent, and historians regard his existence as questionable. Who is he, and did he ever tread this earth? The more one looks for Moses, or even *at* Moses, the farther away he seems, and the search grows rather bruising. After a while, one's curiosity shifts from Moses to the act of looking. What do we want of

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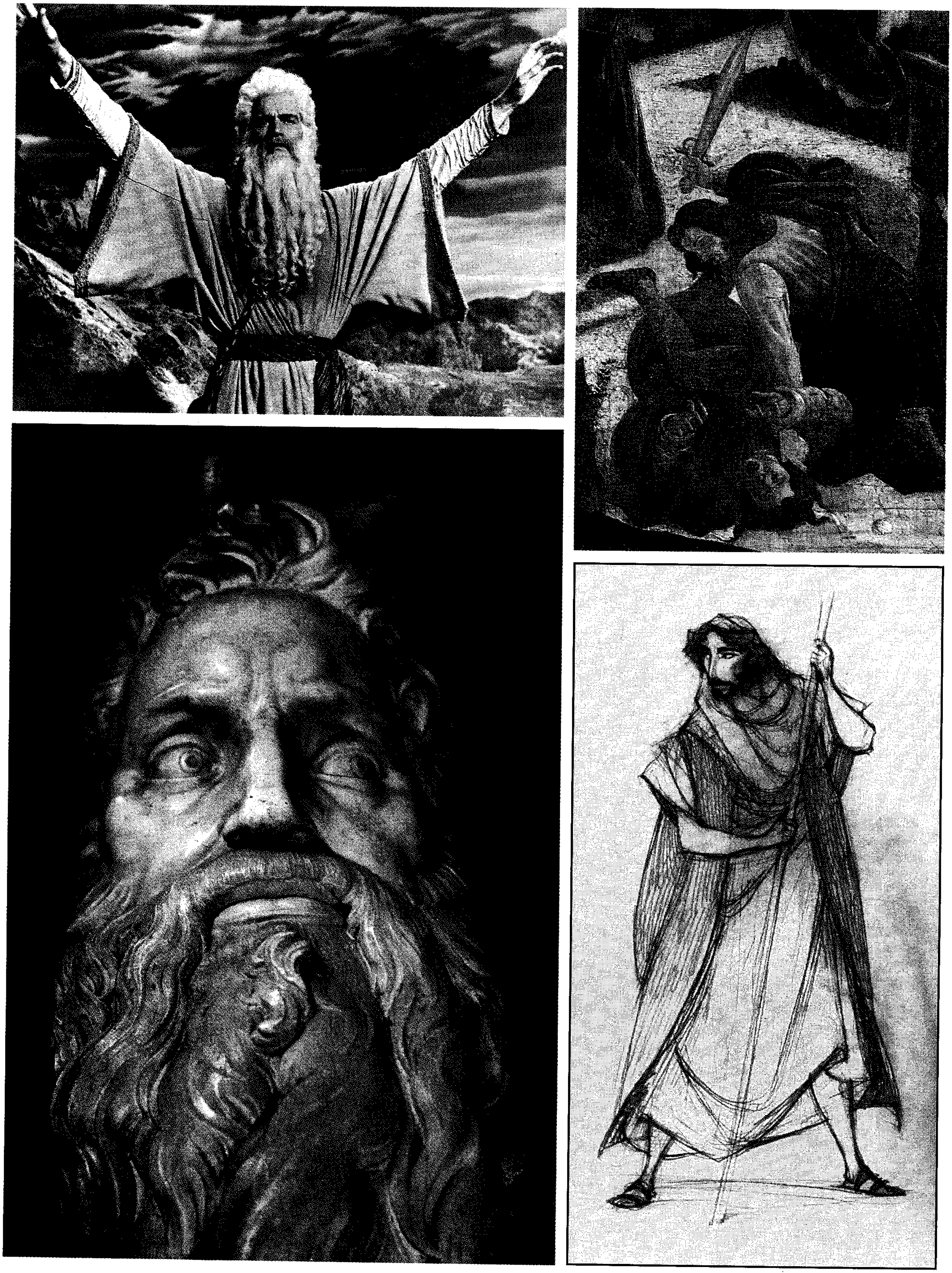
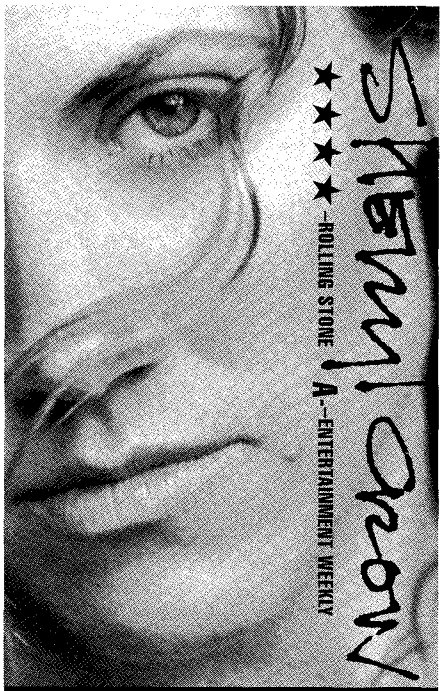


Clockwise from top left: Charlton Heston in "The Ten Commandments"; detail from Sandro Botticelli's "The Youth of Moses," in the Sistine Chapel; character drawing by Carter Goodrich for "The Prince of Egypt"; and the head of Michelangelo's sculpture.



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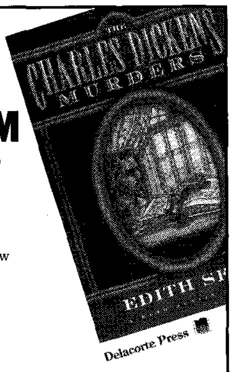

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Moses? Why can't we get rid of him? How odd that those two modernist revolutionaries Sigmund Freud and Arnold Schoenberg should find themselves obsessed with an authoritarian lawgiver. Paradox, treacherous as a snake on the banks of the Nile, lies in wait for anyone who examines the Hebrew "prince of Egypt."

WHATEVER their indiscretions, the big-screen spectaculars hardly rise to the level of blasphemy. In their essentials, these entertainments stay securely within the traditional Mosaic narrative. The DreamWorks animators who did "The Prince of Egypt" had a ball with Egyptian motifs, playing freely with sphinx, pyramid, and obelisk, precisely because the iconographic meaning of those motifs is fixed and apparent to everyone. Egypt represents a rigid and monumental devotion to the cult of death, while the Hebrews represent a new humanity and an openness to life. In keeping with the conventions of Mosaic narrative, then, the exodus in "The Prince of Egypt" is conceived as a series of triumphant oppositions: Israel over Egypt; the abstract apprehension of God over the sordidly tangible assurances of idolatry; and ethics over power. Moses has the one true God, Egypt all the false ones. Human nature, by accepting true religion, takes a step forward into the future.

That sombrely exultant view of Moses, however, has always depended upon our ignoring much discordant information. First of all, a close reading of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—such as the popular Biblical interpreter Jonathan Kirsch conducts in his new book, "Moses: A Life" (Ballantine; $27.50)—leads to contradictory notions of the great man. The figure in the Torah—the five books of Moses—is alarmingly changeable, his relations with God tortured and complicated almost beyond recounting. When God announces himself to Moses from the burning bush, Moses, slow of speech, is bashful, and shrinks from the great commission that God gives him—the liberation of God's people from Egypt. Moses then makes the extraordinary blunder of asking God his name. "I AM THAT I AM," the Lord thunders back at him (in the King James version). That is: I am the very principle of existence itself. Does that satisfy you? After this shaky beginning, they part as friends, and Moses sets about his task. But then, abruptly and inexplicably, "it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him." Why? The Bible does not say. Only the quick-witted intervention of Moses' wife, Zipporah, saves him from death. Zipporah performs an emergency circumcision on their son, which appeases the Lord. (The animators at DreamWorks somehow omitted this scene.)

At times, as Kirsch emphasizes, Moses seems decisive and powerful; at other times, he seems a trembling and unsure vassal. As God perversely hardens Pharaoh's heart and deploys His miracles, the Hebrews, facing their Egyptian masters, grow frightened, and Moses applies to his patron in plaintive moods. He requires propping up, so that he, in turn, can prop up his wavering charges. Again and again, the Lord favors Moses, speaking to him "as a man speaketh unto his friend." He holds conferences with him not only on the mountaintop but in Moses' desert tent. When Moses is receiving the commandments, and the Hebrews, furiously backsliding, fall into revelry before the golden calf, God threatens to kill all the children of Israel and to make Moses himself a new Noah, whose seed will people a great race. Moses refuses, and manipulates God brilliantly by (of all things) appealing to His reputation:

> And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

It is Moses' greatest, bravest moment, the occasion when he most clearly suggests mind and will and wile. How does one accommodate absolute power without becoming a toady or a fool? All along, Moses has been the medium through which polytheism is left behind and belief in the one God—faceless, unincarnated, immaterial, omnipresent, and absolute—is imposed on the children of Israel. But at that moment, without commission from God, Moses' job description changes: he becomes the medium through which Israel survives as a nation.

And still betrayal lies in wait. Forty years later, after Moses commits a trivial offense, God refuses to let him cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land; he throttles him, at a mere hundred and twenty years of age ("his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated"), and buries him in an unmarked grave. For the Biblical writers, the unceremonious burial served to establish that Moses was a man, not God; an object of reverence but not of cult worship. Yet there is something negligent, even contemptuous, in God's final disposal of his greatest servant.

FACED with such anomalies (and there are many more), religious interpreters have often felt a need to fuss with Moses, to add to him or remake him. In the vast Midrashic literature of rabbinical exegesis and tale-spinning, Moses leads an entire second life, some of it more fantastic than that of any movie hero: he's an infant prodigy, a great warrior, the king of Ethiopia, and so on. The legendary versions of Moses fill in the vexing gaps and stony silences in the Bible and explain away its mysteries. But though they soothe, they do not provide reassurance. Reassurance, it turns out, is not to be had.

In the work of textual critics and historicists, Moses has tended to break up into the warring constructs of different Biblical writers with opposing interests. There is general agreement that the Torah was written in pieces, and it was written at different times (starting, perhaps, around 1000 B.C.), and by different writers, known to scholars as the Elohist, the Yahwist (or, in German, Jahwist—the J writer), the Priestly Writer, and the Deuteronomist. As they recounted the old stories, some of the writers may have been pursuing their own agenda—they may have been promoting lineage claims (tracing their priestly forebears back to Moses or his brother Aaron), or arguing for controversial notions of ritual, or pushing current political ambitions. When all these versions were patched together, probably in the fifth century B.C., and the Torah came into being, editing failed to harmonize and unify the text. A bad editing job! That's why Moses' behavior is so bizarrely variable and God's treatment of him at times arbitrary and inconsistent. Moses is a kind of Frankenstein's monster, composed not out of different parts but out of different needs.

For those who find such analysis distasteful, there is a still greater shock in store. It has been traditionally assumed that the liberation from Egypt took place during the long reign (1292 to 1225 B.C.) of Rameses II. But there is no archival or archeological evidence for the claim that the ancient Hebrews were ever in Egypt in sizable numbers during the second millennium B.C. The Egyptians kept good records: there are traces of an earlier Semitic people, the Hyksos, who conquered Egypt around 1710 B.C., ran the empire for more than a hundred years, and were finally expelled. So why is there no trace of the Hebrews, who supposedly came several hundred years later?

Kirsch, who has read the scholarship, goes to work on the Exodus story, by

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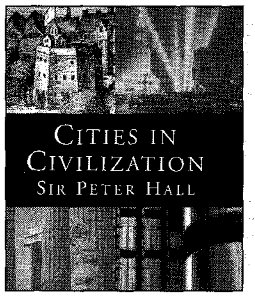

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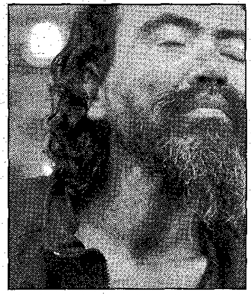

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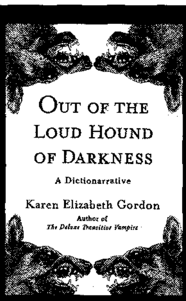

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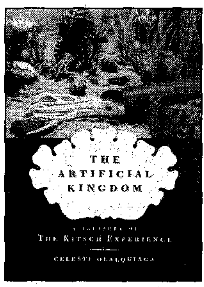

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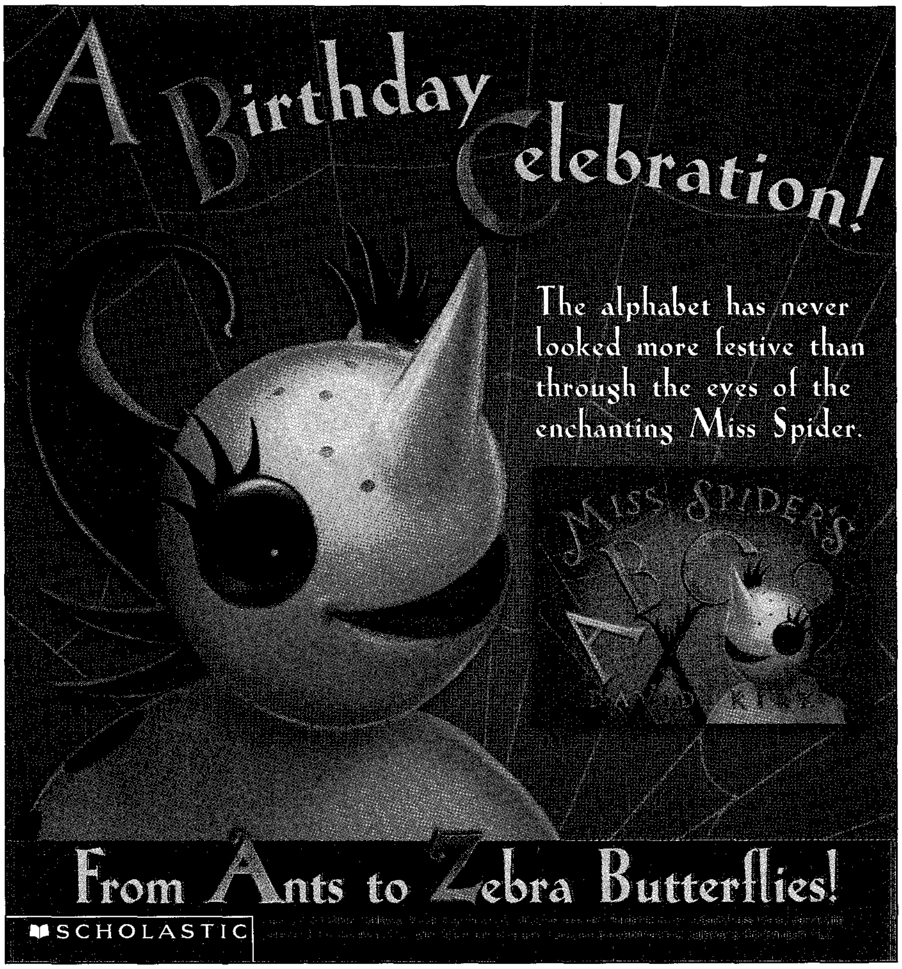
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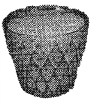

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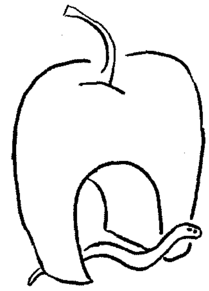
turns weaving and unravelling the narrative, like an exegetical Penelope. The episode of the infant Moses placed in a basket and floated down the Nile bears a suspicious resemblance to an ancient Mesopotamian myth. Pharaoh's daughter, who receives the baby, was unlikely to have bathed in the unsalubrious river, and so close to the slave quarters. The geography of Exodus is indecipherable, the narrative is inconsistent, and marks of later composition and reconstruction are everywhere. For instance, Exodus says that Pharaoh forced the Hebrews to make their own bricks. But the Egyptians used cut stone, not brick, for their large building projects. Brick *was* a principal building material in Babylon, to which the Jews were exiled after the destruction of the Temple, in 587 B.C. Was Exodus written, or edited, during the Babylonian captivity? Does it represent a conscious projection backward onto an earlier, perhaps mythical, captivity in Egypt?

If so, why would the Biblical writers invent a story of enslavement? I spoke to a professor of ancient history, who asked not to be identified, and who offered his theory in nearly conspiratorial tones: not all the Jews, according to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, writing in the first century A.D., were eager to leave the Fertile Crescent for the semi-arid environs of Israel. The Book of Exodus was composed, the professor speculated, by nationalist elements who deployed the story of the promised land as a way of persuading recalcitrant Jews in Babylon to go home. I guess I understand his reluctance to be quoted: at the very least, the theory places Zionism, which draws heavily on the return, in an unflattering light.

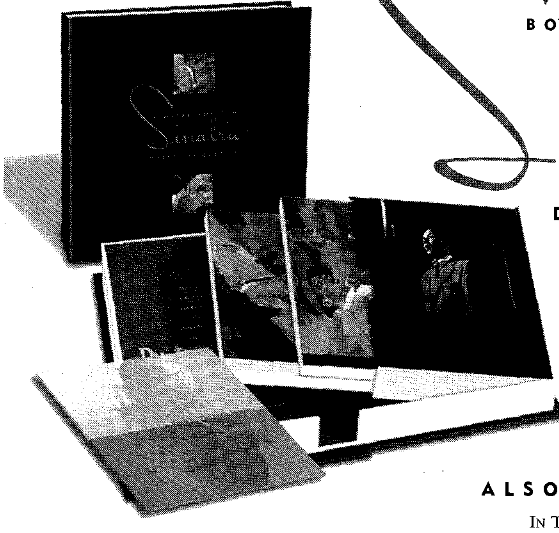
In the face of modern Biblical criticism, the believer may find solace in the position that Martin Buber advanced in his 1946 book, "Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant." Acknowledging the standard historicist theories of Biblical composition, Buber says, in effect, "So what?" It matters little that the Bible was written down at different times and places and then imperfectly collated. Nothing changes the truth that a generation of Hebrews in the second millennium B.C. experienced "a primeval state of amazement." In subsequent generations, this experience passed into poetic saga—in an oral culture, such devices as repetition and rhythm make detailed memory possible. Since the memories were mixed with faith, exaggerations and improbabilities no doubt crept into the poems. Eventually, this mixture of revelation, poetry, and enthusiasm was set down as Scripture. But an experience of transcendence came first: revelation was what set the entire saga-writing process in motion.

Without accepting something like Buber's synthesis of faith and history, one may have to leave Biblical narrative behind and give oneself over to the Egyptologists. In a recent study, "Moses the Egyptian" (Harvard; $29.95), Jan Assmann, a German Egyptologist who teaches at Heidelberg, presents an analysis of the non-Biblical and anti-Biblical accounts of Moses. In these accounts, which go back to ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman historians, Moses is regarded not as a Hebrew slave raised by Egyptians but as an Egyptian, period. Indeed, the Egyptian historians of the third, second, and first centuries B.C. produced a nasty "counterhistory" to the Scriptures in which Moses is described as a rebel Egyptian priest who led a group of lepers out of the country. (Such assertions initiated one of the most enduring themes of anti-Semitism; the association of Jews with illness and plague would turn up in Europe fifteen hundred years later.) Around the first century A.D., the great Roman historian Tacitus produced a variation: Egypt, suffering from an epidemic, drove out the Hebrews on the advice of an oracle. In the desert, Moses became a leader and invented a monotheistic creed that was the opposite of the Egyptian religion in every way.



In the ancient world, the various polytheistic systems got along with one another quite well. Monotheism, with its exclusionary fervor, was the revolution, the outrage; indeed, from our viewpoint, it marks the end of the ancient world. Where did it come from? Assmann is not the first historian to draw attention to the tumultuous reign (around 1372 to 1354 B.C.) of Pharaoh Amenhotep IV, also know as Akhenaten, who, Assmann observes, "had done something very similar to what memory had ascribed to Moses: he had abolished the cults and idols of Egyptian polytheism and established a purely monotheistic worship of a new god of light, whom he called 'Aton.'" Akhenaten closed the temples and forbade worship of the old gods, causing enormous suffering and dislocation. In Egypt, the inability to worship the gods was associated with illness and plague.

All of this suggests a rather disturbing origin for the Biblical narrative. If one combines the Egyptian memories of the earlier Semitic people, the Hyksos, who were driven out of Egypt, and the traumas associated with Akhenaten's monotheistic reign, and if one then performs a little narrative inversion, one might come out with something like the story of Exodus, with its monotheistic revolution and its plagues brought down on the heads of the Egyptians by God and his instrument, Moses. Assmann believes that the Biblical writers fitted the old Egyptian tales into their bur-



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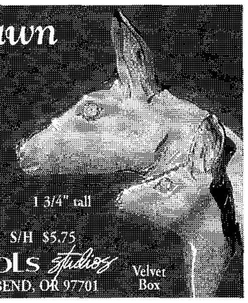

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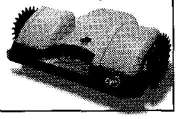

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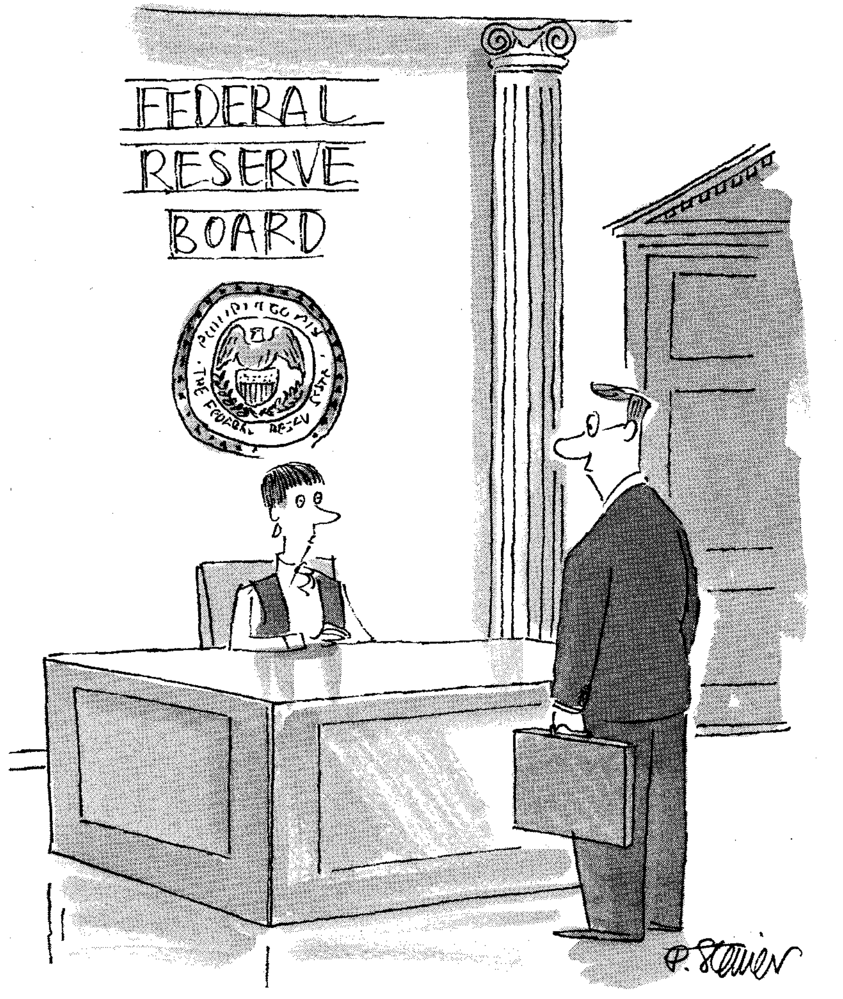
geoning theology of the covenant and election of the children of Israel. "Within this frame," Assmann writes, "the withdrawal from Egypt could not be understood other than as a rise from nothingness to identity, from bondage to freedom, from impurity to purity, and from forlornness to alliance." Exodus, in other words, is a self-confirming, self-glorifying myth of origins.

Hearing all this, even a secular Jew like me feels a spreading dismay. Though I enjoy, as an intellectual game, scientific explanations of the miracles (was it an outbreak of marine flagellates that reddened the waters of the Nile?), I had never confronted the literal question of Moses' existence; I had never felt the need. Moses, in my mind, was the stern elder brother I was lucky enough not to have had but was there, anyway, below consciousness, and I find myself uneasy with the notion of his purely legendary status. Nor am I the only one so afflicted. In recent weeks, I have told a variety of people, many of them very well informed, that no evidence exists of a Hebrew sojourn in ancient Egypt, and nearly all have blinked, stared, and swallowed hard, as if something had been taken away from them. Jew and non-Jew alike, skeptic and believer, they are not quite prepared to think of Moses as a kind of nomadic King Arthur—as the hero of the greatest campfire story ever told.

What is it we are holding on to? Moses remains distant, impersonal, featureless, for he is not a hero of mind (like Oedipus), or of guile (like Odysseus), and though he kills ruthlessly, eliminating dissidents and idolaters, he is not a warrior (like Achilles or Hector). For Christians, he is a savior who first prophesies the coming of *the* Savior. ("Had ye believed Moses," Jesus says, "ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.") But he is never witty and tender, like Jesus. He speaks bluntly, not in teasing, artful parables; he announces restrictions and prohibitions; he offers a covenant and endless judgment, not redemption.

In two Sistine Chapel frescoes, Botticelli renders Moses as the spirit of mil-



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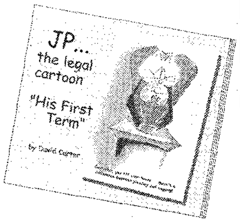

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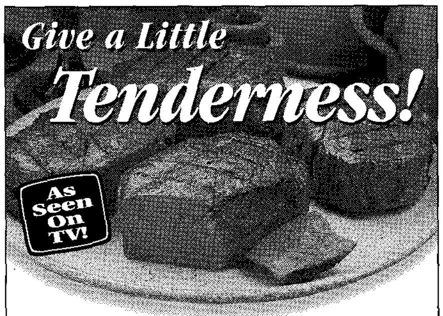
itant goodness: rescuing, receiving, leading, chastising. The frescoes are a kind of Renaissance cinema. Moses is seen performing several actions, and one follows them in narrative progression. He emerges as the supreme image of—well, of responsibility and virtuous action, not the most exciting of qualities. In Michelangelo's heroic sculpture, the dominant emotion, of course, is wrath. Seated, with the tablets tucked under his right arm, his beard pinned to his chest by a mighty hand, Moses has turned, furiously, to the side, aroused by some abomination. He has the broad-framed, affronted sternness of a man who will convert chaos and egotism into order and moral clarity. Is he on the verge of taking action? Freud, in a 1913 essay on the statue, rejected the assumption of earlier commentators that Moses is about to rise. On the contrary, he says, Moses' position, closely observed, suggests that he has restrained himself from rising; he has overcome his rage, at least for the moment, renouncing instinctual gratification. He is a hero of civilization.

What Freud does not say is that Moses, even in his noblest representation, is robbed of glory—robbed by a banal error. Exodus tells us that when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai after his second period of forty days and forty nights spent with God, his face "shone," or, in a recent translation, was "radiating." It turns out that the Hebrew root for "beam" or "shine" or "radiate" is the same as that for "horn." In the fourth century A.D., when the Hebrew Bible was translated into Latin—the famous Vulgate, which was used by the Church and read by educated Europeans all through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance—Moses is described as descending Sinai with horns. What could the translators have been thinking? Moses looks God in the face and develops horns? But in Michelangelo's sculpture there they are, two absurd objects nestled in his great curling hair. Crowned with horns, the Jew unwittingly acquires satanic associations or is linked, willy-nilly, to Pan, the horned and horny minor Greek god of revelry. Poor Moses.

DOES any of this matter? Moses, obviously, lives fully in what people have made of him. Breath has been blown into his nostrils by thousands of years of longing, ambition, and hope. In



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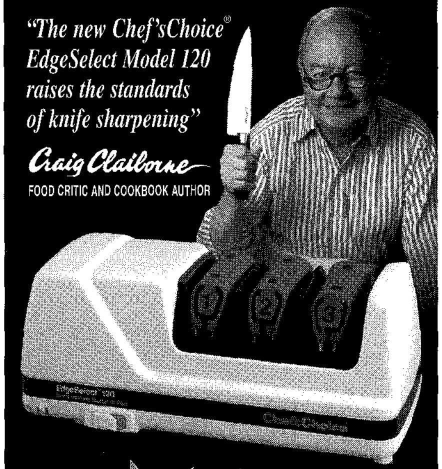

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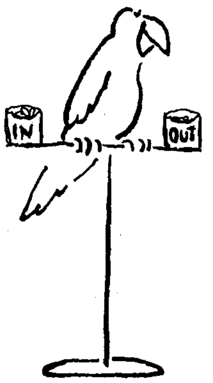
Exodus's tale of desert wandering, the preoccupation with survival shifts from the personal to the communal, from the tribal to the national. The children of Israel attain law, government, and moral accountability. As the hero of a liberation story, Moses became not only the creator of the Jewish people but the exemplar of the successive stages of estrangement, liberation, and return for *all* people—a central figure in the religious and political life of, say, the black slaves in America, who saw the American South as Egypt and re-created Moses, in spirituals, prayers, and incantations, as a central element in the rhetorical lyricism of African-American life. "I've been to the mountaintop," Martin Luther King chanted in his last sermon, in Memphis, the night before he was assassinated. "And I've seen the Promised Land."

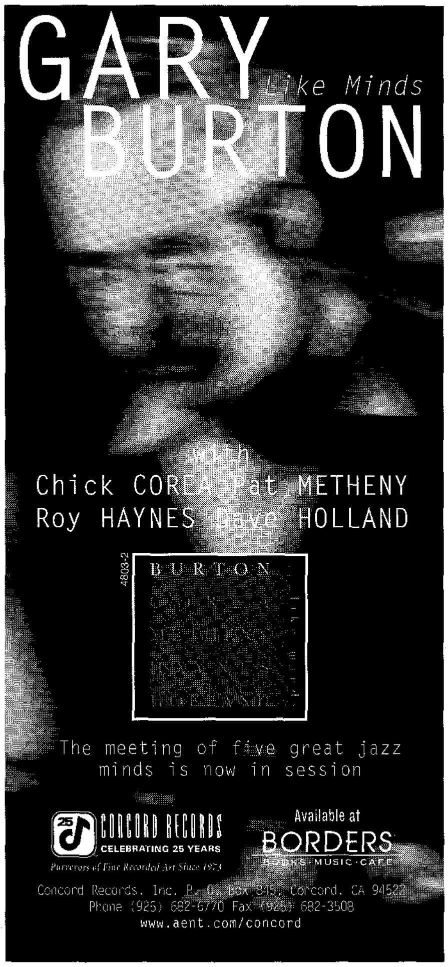


Thomas Cahill, in his shrewd and impassioned recent best-seller, "The Gift of the Jews," even describes Moses as the creator, in Western consciousness, of a new way of thinking about time. Religion before Sinai—in Mesopotamian worship, for instance—was affixed to the cycle of seasons and sacrifices, the turning of the wheel of nature in the heavens and on earth. But once the Hebrews reach the desert the present tense arrives. What matters, suddenly, is what you make of your moral and emotional life in the here and now—today, at this very minute. You are now on trial; you are always on trial. The Jews, Cahill says, invented the Western urgency, the modern notion of time. If so, Moses, whether he existed or not, wound the clock.

Re-imagining Moses as an Egyptian doesn't alter his centrality in the West. Freud, in his late, wildly speculative "Moses and Monotheism" (1939), insisted that Moses was an Egyptian prince and disciple of Akhenaten. After the Pharaoh died, polytheism was joyously restored to Egypt, and Moses, stranded, abandoned Egypt and found a wandering tribe in the desert, the Hebrews, that he could preach to. It's a moving little book: Freud clearly identified with Moses the lawgiver, who imposes a new inwardness on a stiff-necked people. He may have regarded all religion as a form of neurosis, but, still, for Freud, as for Kant before him, the exaltation of an invisible God was one of the greatest moments in our moral history. (Kant wrote, of the proscription against graven images, "Perhaps there is no more sublime passage in the Jewish Law.") Renouncing the pleasure of idol worship in favor of a God conceived abstractly opens up the interior region of spirituality and fills the worshipper with pride. Yes, that is the basis of Moses' power—he creates pride by forcing the hard road upon his followers. Freud the atheist leads back to the necessity of Moses.

Arnold Schoenberg chose the hard road, too. Schoenberg, who was both the last romantic and the ultimate modernist, imposed the discipline of the twelve-tone row on the voluptuously expressive Mahlerian idiom that he adored, and practiced, as a young man. In his later years, he openly linked himself to the lawgiver who prohibits easy faith, and nowhere more clearly than in the great, difficult, spookily beautiful opera "Moses und Aron," which he wrote in the early nineteen-thirties, and which the Metropolitan Opera will finally stage this winter. The work is haunted by the fear of seduction—the easy pleasure of idolatry (melody?) and false gods (Stravinsky? Gershwin?). Schoenberg wrote the text as well as the music, and in the first act Aaron asks his brother how he can "worship what you dare not even represent." In Act II, when Moses is receiving the law on Mt. Sinai, Aaron, answering the crowd's desire for something tangible, hastily creates the golden calf, unleashing an orgy of celebration and despair. The stark, haunted music of Moses' first encounter with God gives way to the violent pounding of brass and timpani.

In the third act, Moses' austere idea of God triumphs. God is unrepresentable, "bound by nothing," and Moses chastises his brother: "You have betrayed God to the gods, the idea to images, the chosen folk to others, the extraordinary to the commonplace." But these are resonant words only: Schoenberg composed the music for the first two acts and stopped. Tonal composers like Benjamin Britten may have continued to seduce the audience into the opera house, but Schoenberg gave up on "Moses und Aron," as if opera, no mat-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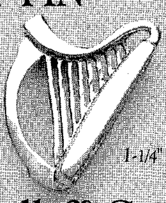
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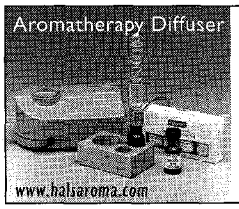
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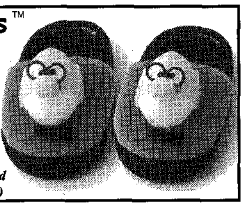
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ter how difficult and unpopular, were bound to "betray the extraordinary to the commonplace." His silence is exemplary—the Mosaic code embodied in a purity so great that it wills itself into extinction.

MOSES dies at the end of Deuteronomy; most of the book is given over to a painful farewell address. He still speaks to the Hebrews as the Lord's servant, but with awful anxiety, as if he could discharge God's judgment on him only by increasing the severity of its application to the children of Israel. Entering Canaan, the conquering Hebrews will surely be seduced by the false gods of the people they encounter. In anticipation, Moses becomes fiercer than God. Yet, when he speaks of the punishments that will befall the Hebrews, they sound similar, in form, to God's punishment of him: he speaks of how the Hebrews will be enticed by happiness and then denied happiness.

> Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.... Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them; for they shall go into captivity.

Even here, at the climax of the emancipationist narrative, we are presented with an irreconcilable discord, compounded by all the stresses and contradictions that compose the Moses story—service and rebellion, yearning and despair, deliverance and futility, ecstasy and punishment.

Moses, who asks us to worship what we can only imagine, and who is himself oddly unreachable, even hidden, represents the heroism of self-denial and a loathing of the commonplace. At the end of his life, his tormented fears reveal the contradictions in those demands. He holds others to standards that God has judged him to have violated. He is not a hypocrite; he is a human failure, like the rest of us, only far angrier about it than we are. If we took him literally, no movies, no art, no representation at all would be possible; Schoenberg's silence would be the only logical result. Since nearly everything in our culture repudiates Moses' demands, our pursuit of him is bitter and proudly paradoxical—the pursuit of an ideal too lovingly hated, and too wrathfully adored, ever to be attained or abandoned. ♦

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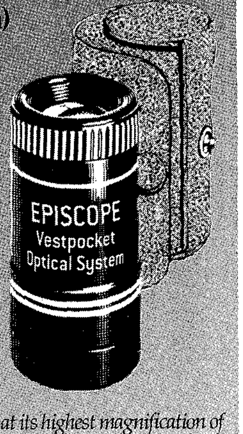

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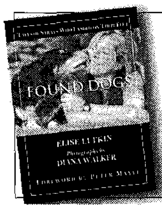

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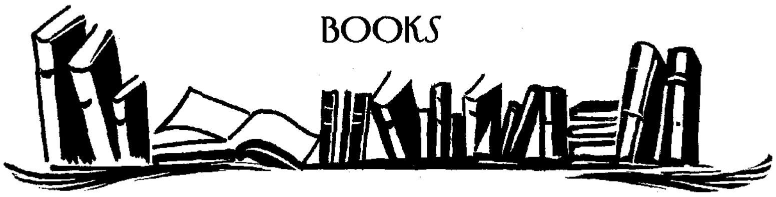


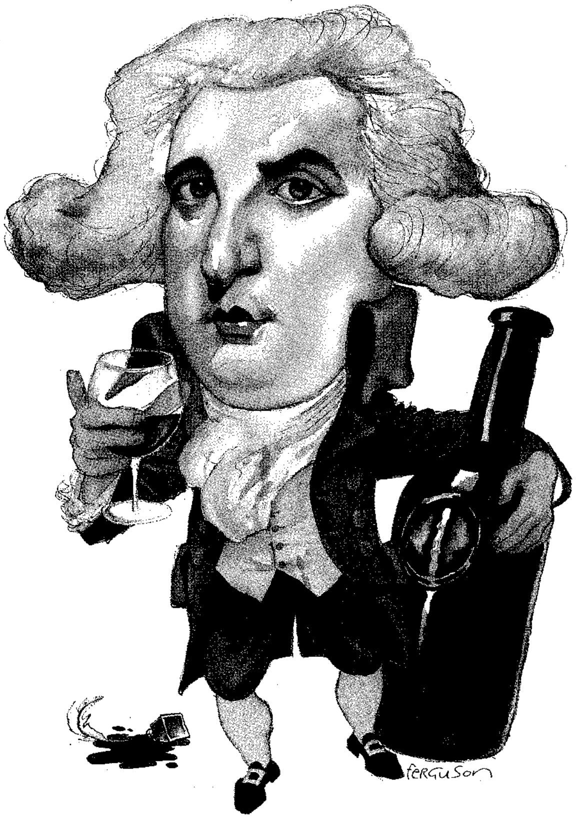
BOOKS

A LEADING MAN

How the playwright Richard Sheridan made Parliament into political theatre.

BY PETER ACKROYD

It is reported that when Richard Brinsley Sheridan was asked whether he was a rogue or a fool, he replied that he was somewhere between the two. He might have added that he was also a dramatist and a politician, although the distinction between these two roles was again, for him, a fine one. His was a fevered career, full of drink and stratagem, of cabal and masquerade. It began brilliantly but soon took on the morbid glow of a dissolving world. It is, in truth, a representative story of the late eighteenth century.

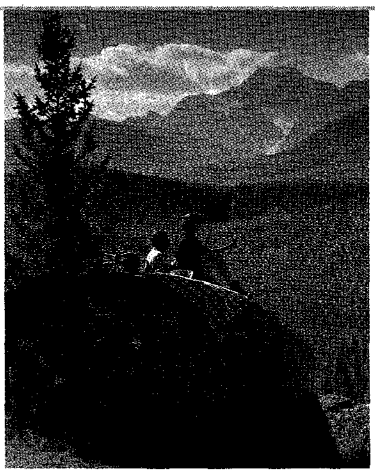


"Old Sherry," as Sheridan was called, went from playwriting to politics, and then from politics to port.

JAMES FERGUSON

Sheridan was born in Dublin, in the autumn of 1751, and one of the merits of Fintan O'Toole's lively and absorbing new biography, "A Traitor's Kiss: The Life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, 1751-1816" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $30), is the extent to which the author identifies his protagonist not only within familial "shadows of madness, poverty and treason" and with tensions between Sheridan's Irish sensibility and his Anglo-Irish gentility but also with the tormented history of Ireland itself. Though his grandfather had been close to Swift, his father, a theatre manager and teacher of oratory, was described by Sheridan's first biographer, the Irish balladeer Thomas Moore, as "a wrong-headed, whimsical man." He was certainly wrong about his son: he considered him a dunce and he consigned him to Harrow, the English public school.

His sister once explained to Sheridan that his want of settled character was due to the fact that he had "too early been thrown upon the world" and alienated from his family. He later confessed that at school he was "much given to crying when alone," but he spent his life concealing or misrepresenting his true feelings. His schoolfellows considered him merely idle and amiable. How could it be, then, that within ten years of leaving Harrow he was able to write five plays, three of which have made the world laugh ever since? "The Rivals," "The Critic," and "The School for Scandal" were considered the greatest comedies since those of William Congreve, nearly a century earlier, and were not equalled until another Dubliner, Oscar Wilde, completed the Irish "ascendancy" over



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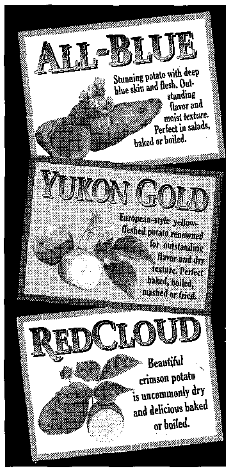
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the stage which Sheridan had begun.

There have been many biographies. After Moore's, the most compelling was by Walter Sichel, whose monumental narrative, "Sheridan" (1909), is a study in eighteenth-century culture as much as the history of one man. In the nineteenth century, fuelled by William Cobbett's tirade against Sheridan, "The Political Proteus" (1804), the chroniclers of his life considered his politics to be of paramount importance, but their counterparts in the twentieth century emphasized his art. Now, at last, in "A Traitor's Kiss," his art and his politics are interpreted as equivocal aspects of the same wounded sensibility.

SHERIDAN felt that he had been rejected by his family—as, indeed, he had been—and therefore re-created himself so that he might never be rejected again. His mother had once said, "We have a mind to accustom him early to shift for himself," and that is precisely what he set about doing. He was inordinately ambitious from the start, but he took care to conceal that fact from everyone about him. It became his habit simply to "sit and think," and to follow the track of leading principles or opportunities until he saw where they might successfully take him. This gave him the appearance of indolence or procrastination, but when he had eventually reached a satisfactory conclusion he acted on it with all speed.

The first evidence for this comes from his long stay in Bath, in 1770, where he had been obliged to join his father after he finished school, at sixteen years of age. Bath, hot or cold, is always Bath—a spa town, where gossip and scandal are greater restoratives than any of the waters. He took advantage of the dramatic possibilities of the scene by running off with a young woman, who happened to be the most charming singer of the day, and then secretly marrying her in France in the spring of 1772; on their return to Bath, moreover, he fought two duels with the same man on her behalf. The episode might have come from his first play, "The Rivals" (1775), in which all the vicissitudes of his life are refined into laughter, but at the time it was in earnest. He was wounded in the second duel, and was in fear for his life, but on his recovery he was generally applauded for his bravery

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as well as for his survival. To his most recent biographer this episode also reveals his "genius for improvisation, and powers of persuasion that bordered on the miraculous." O'Toole makes the further, significant point that his success as a duellist had turned him into a gentleman. Thus Sheridan began a lifelong romance with himself, trusting implicitly that his private being might become public property without further injury.

And so it proved, at least in the plays that he began to write after he moved to London, in 1774. He once said that he had never read any drama, but this may be the pardonable exaggeration of a man who tried to hide his study and labor under the guise of spontaneity and easy fluency. Certainly he had learned something from the comic dramatists of the late seventeenth century, notably Congreve and Vanbrugh, but his facility smoothed away all their rancor and profanity and vulgarity. The earliest version of "The Rivals" was too wordy—"I wish these people would have done talking," a member of the pit said of the actors on the first night, "and let the play begin"—but Sheridan, instinctively alert to public taste and mood, shortened and condensed the drama.

In this first play are all the constituents of his art, whereby he manages to burlesque both the events of his own life and the conventions of the theatre itself. "The Rivals" provides a piece of matchmaking as complicated as any seventeenth-century masquerade: rival suitors misinterpret each other's actions and are, in turn, misunderstood by the lady in question. It also brought into the world that woman of many words, Mrs. Malaprop, who—along with Lady Bracknell and Mrs. Gamp—has attained a kind of immortality. "The School for Scandal," which followed two years later, was a triumph of laughter over the malice and hypocrisy of Sheridan's social milieu and, as such, a reflection of his own mastery of the same. Here are sibling rivalry, familial shame, debt, and embarrassment, all placed within a burnished globe of artifice. "The Critic" (1779) was equally popular, primarily because Sheridan was spoofing his own profession: it concerns the rehearsal of a lamentably bad play and, with its subtle confusions of life and artifice, predates Pirandello and Stoppard without ever seeming dated itself.

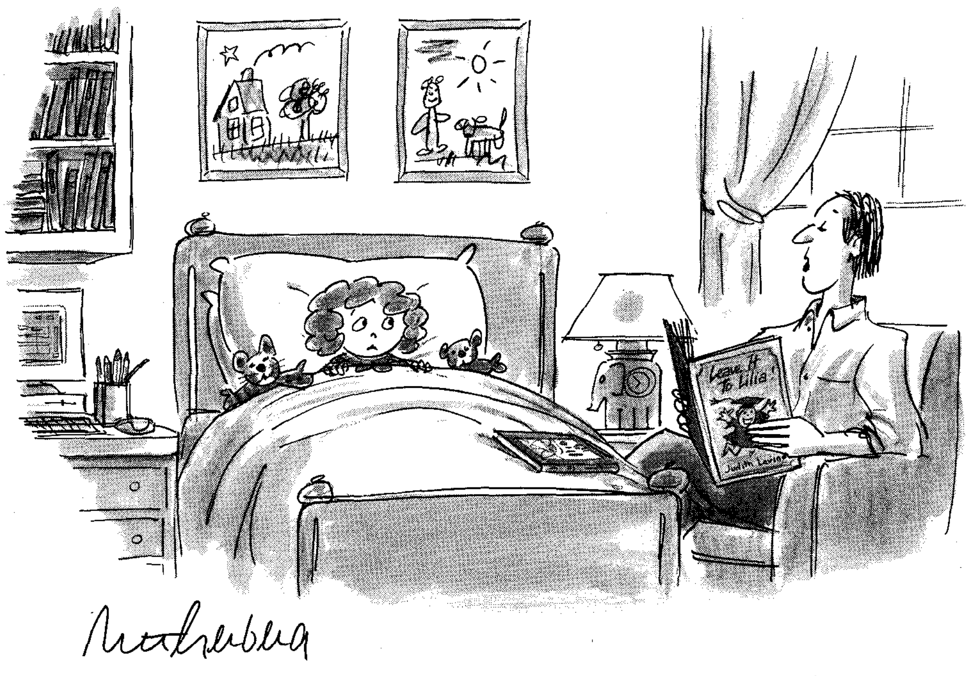
His plays are the work of an orator, perhaps, rather than of a dramatist. His characters are all language and disguise, with no interior life. It would be hard, for example, to imagine them thinking offstage. Yet if the dramas are light they are continuously funny; they are so light, in fact, that they float above the postures or passions of their period.

Sheridan's theatrical success was immediate and profound. But even before he completed his first play he was composing political letters and pamphlets. He had such a "keen thirst for distinction" that he couldn't settle for the stage alone. After the success of "The School for Scandal," two years after that of "The Rivals," he decided to remove himself to the grander, if not greater, theatre of Parliament; he might not become its manager (that place was reserved for William Pitt), but he might at least become a principal actor and steal a scene or two. He was elected a Member of Parliament for the borough of Stafford, in 1780, and from that time forward he devoted his considerable dramatic abilities to political intrigue. He found himself in what was for a playwright the unique position of writing speeches only for himself.

It has often been maintained that Sheridan's life as a public man was an unfortunate diversion from a more than promising literary career, but, as O'Toole justifiably points out, there was no real difference in that period between politics and the theatre. Sheridan never lost his interest in the drama, however, and in 1776 he dared to replace the irreplaceable Garrick as manager of the Drury Lane Theatre. This position brought with it considerable public and cultural power, as O'Toole suggests, and so its proper extension lay in the cultivation of political influence.

During elections, the hustings of London became great stages for melodrama and pantomime—"a vast theatre," O'Toole says, "but a theatre in riot." The reports of parliamentary debates include their own stage directions, as if the proceedings were taking place in Drury Lane: "Loud cry of hear! hear! . . . Mr Windham here bowed . . . Mr Sheridan sits on the Treasury Bench." It was an age of demonstrativeness in every sense, whether in the Gordon Riots or in the unchecked tears that became fashionable in the salons and in the theatres. The flood of sensibility and of sentiment had arrived, to be seen no more often in the histrionics of the theatres than in the speeches of the Commons.

Thus it was also the period of the legendary parliamentary orators—Edmund Burke, with his "great melody" of impassioned eloquence, and Charles James Fox, with his extraordinary vehemence and utter simplicity. And then came Sheridan. After his first speech, in 1780,



"No writers were harmed or mistreated in the preparation of this story."

a fellow-M.P. advised him to stick to "your former pursuits," to which Sheridan replied, "It is in me, however, and, by God, it shall come out." "It" certainly did. Pitt said that one of Sheridan's speeches "surpassed all the eloquence of ancient and modern time," while Burke concurred that it transcended "any record or tradition." Sheridan possessed a "singularly musical" voice, it seems, and a fluent, expressive countenance. Extraordinary excitement was said to have prevailed when he spoke in Westminster Hall against Warren Hastings, for malfeasance as head of the East India Company. "Tickets for the hall were changing hands for as much as fifty guineas. . . . Many fashionable ladies lost their shoes in the mêlée, some going into the hall barefoot, others picking up other women's strays." These are the words of O'Toole, who describes in equally evocative terms how at the end of this speech Sheridan "swooned back into the arms of the waiting Burke."

It may be that dramatic events call forth dramatic methods, however, and it happened that Sheridan entered politics at a time of considerable ferment in public affairs. The American war was all but lost, and the Gordon Riots had consigned parts of London to flame; there was corruption in India and revolt in Ireland, just as a revolution in France began to stir. Sheridan's politics have been described as those of a "patriotic Radical" or "imperialist democrat," by which is meant that he generally and genuinely approved of England's political system yet was always ready to speak fiercely against any abuse of its power toward the Americans, the Irish, or the Indians. Fintan O'Toole in turn attributes this complexity to his innate Irishness or, rather, Anglo-Irishness—since Sheridan's sensitivity to the experience of oppression was mingled with feelings of loyalty toward England.

Sheridan's stance itself prompted accusations of Janus-like hypocrisy and double-dealing, particularly when Sheridan seemed willing to condone, if not actually to promote, a revolution in Ireland at precisely the moment when French revolutionary forces were threatening to invade England. He covered his tracks gracefully, but there was always some suspicion of what he himself called his "restless contriving Temper." Contrivance well suits a dramatist, who

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can thereby enter the minds of a hundred different characters, but it may not play as well for a politician, where steadfastness and earnestness are also considered necessary. Certainly Sheridan played an equivocal part in his close and enduring relationship with the Prince Regent, whose liberalism was really only an aspect of his libertinism. He was the son of George III and, with Sheridan, watched as that unhappy monarch, in his madness, dictated Cervantes and the Bible at the same time to young pages, whom he then made "Baronets and Knights of the Holy Roman Empire." In the event of his proven incapacity, would the Prince or Parliament rule? The good democrat Sheridan decided to work for the Prince. He lied for him and drank with him: the politician who was a professed friend of rebels and revolutionaries was always eager to sup with the monarch-in-waiting at Carlton House. Perhaps for that reason, at the close of a tribute to Sheridan Byron added, "But, alas! poor human nature!"

Sheridan had almost too much of that commodity. He consorted with the prostitutes of Covent Garden, who paraded on his behalf at elections, and was an inveterate gambler on the questions of the day, whether Pitt "will be out or in," and whether he himself would "write another drama in five acts." He always paid his debts of honor, of course, but those of a less noble kind he often chose to ignore. As Charles Surface says of tradesmen in "The School for Scandal," "paying them is only encouraging them." It was rumored that Sheridan once offered a highway robber an I.O.U.

He owed a larger debt to his family, however, which he could never conceivably repay. His first wife, whom he neglected, eventually died after a difficult childbirth, having sought solace with other men. His second wife became tired and miserable before succumbing to cancer, and his son became a charming wastrel. It is recorded, too, that during this time Sheridan drank himself into oblivion almost every night. When he was once found in a high fever, his butler sought to reassure the doctor that the previous evening Sheridan had drunk "nothing particular, only two bottles of port." Yet Sheridan was certainly in good company. The age of the great orators was also the age of the great drunks, Fox and Pitt among them. Parliamentary life was vivid and theatrical, but it was also debilitating. In the space of thirty years, as O'Toole notes, nineteen Members committed suicide.

SHERIDAN'S own fatal course was conducted at a slower pace. He lost the grandest causes of his political life—he had espoused the French Revolution long after it was safe or prudent to do so, and his attempts to liberate the Catholics of Ireland from oppressive penal codes had ended in dead failure—and so was snubbed by the new generation of politicians, who, at the end of the century, considered him to be something of an anachronism. He was also betrayed by the Prince Regent, whose liberal sympathies diminished the closer he came to the throne; like Henry V, he wanted to divest himself of his once endearing Falstaff.

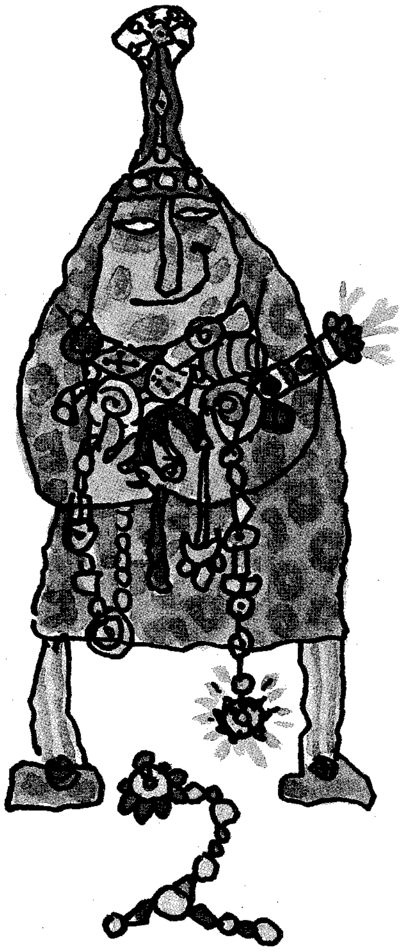
There were other, equally dramatic disappointments. In 1809, the Drury Lane, the theatre he now managed and owned, burned down in a most spectacular fire, and he is supposed to have sat in the nearby Piazza Coffee House and remarked, "A man may surely take a glass of wine by his own fireside." When the theatre was eventually rebuilt with the support of new backers, Sheridan was banished from its management. He also lost his seat in Parliament and no longer remained safe from his creditors: he was soon arrested and taken to a "sponging house," where he had the chance of repaying them before being sent to a debtors' prison. The great Sheridan had become "poor old Sherry," and from this time forward he was reported to be "never sober for a moment."

O'Toole's account of Sheridan's disappointments and dissipations is admirably thorough; it is not easy to sift the dust of forgotten political controversies, but in this biographer's elegant prose they glitter before they fade. If on certain occasions he gives Sheridan the benefit of the doubt, and even sometimes exculpates him on the ground that he was essentially an Irishman besieged among the English, it is with the generous passion of a compatriot.

It does seem the fate of Irishmen to be martyred in England, and, indeed, Sheridan's destiny uncannily resembles that of Oscar Wilde. Both men were avid for fame, and generous to the point

"THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS"

BY WILLIAM STEIG



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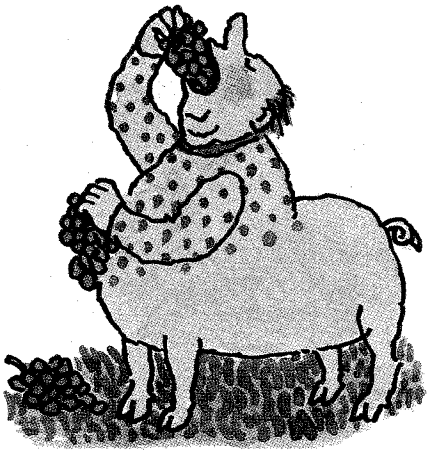

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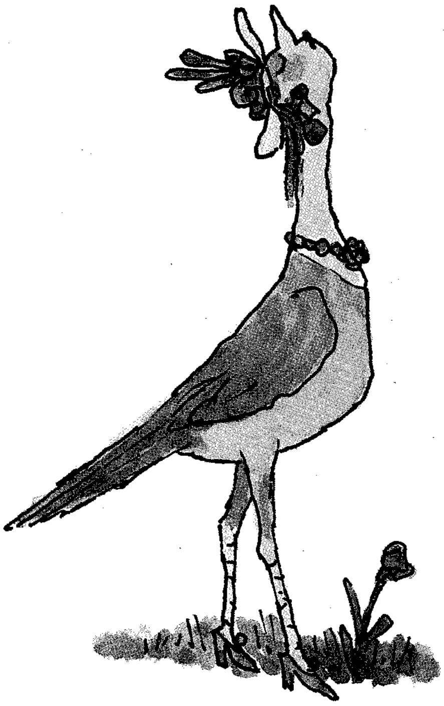

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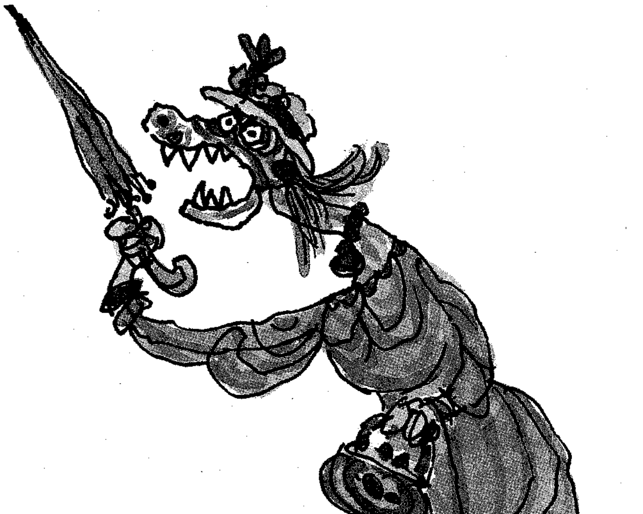

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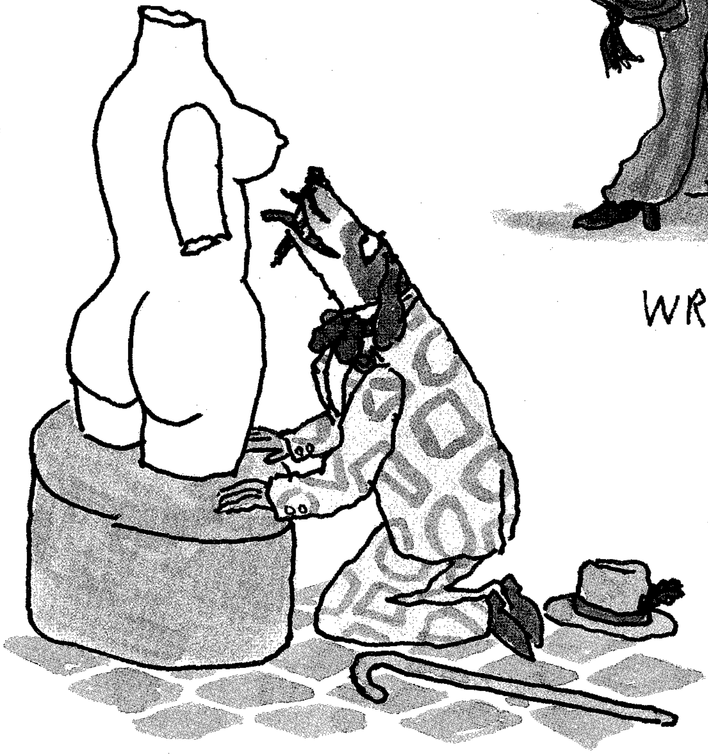

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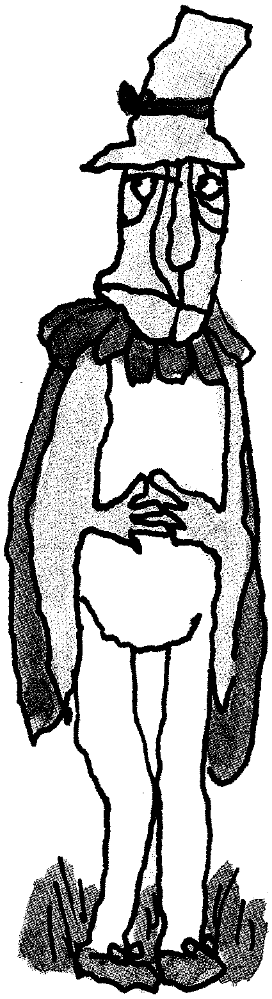

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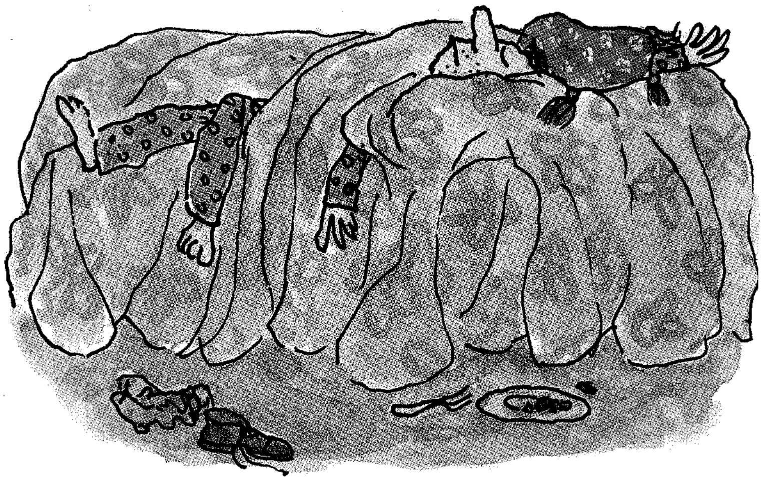

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of prodigality before ending in poverty, drunkenness, and apparent failure. Both dramatists displayed the hypocrisy of English society in their work, while at the same time they tried to dominate it in their lives. There lay the flaw.

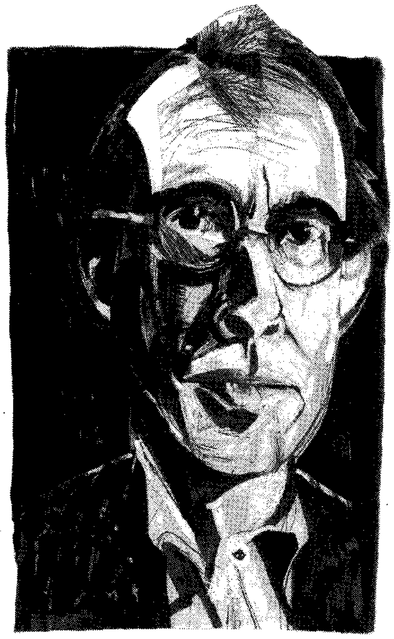
Even as he was dying, Sheridan feared that his creditors would come for him. He was spared that fate, but, as O'Toole puts it, "variations on the auction scene from 'The School for Scandal' were played out" within his own house, which was stripped of its pictures and furnishings in order to pay his debts. He who for most of his career had turned reality into drama now found his dramas take on a grotesque reality.

In the end, Sheridan's triumphs as a playwright far outweighed his ambiguous achievements as a statesman. A few months before his death, he once more visited the Drury Lane Theatre, which had been rebuilt by 1811. Between the acts, he slipped backstage, and his host found him installed in the green room, "with all the actors around him, welcoming him back to the old region of his glory." Perhaps Sheridan finally realized that this was where he would always, truly, belong. ♦

ABSENCE OF MALICE

A major writer in a minor key.

BY DAPHNE MERKIN



Ian McEwan

RICCARDO VECCHIO

In a culture that spawns tens of thousands of new books every year, all of them piteously awaiting a readership, literary prizes are a way of insuring that a select few won't go gently into the publishing night. While the machinery of prize-giving may be looked upon cynically by those familiar with the wangling and special pleading that accompany it, the influence of the prize itself on the book-buying public is not insignificant. Among the welter of prizes here and abroad, the Booker Prize for fiction carries a particular prestige—perhaps because it comes to us from the land of Shakespeare and Johnson, or because it is celebrated with greater fanfare than our own book awards. (The ceremonies are broadcast on national TV, and are attended by various lords and Cabinet ministers.) To be sure, not every novel that has won the Booker has gone on to be acclaimed over here, but the prize has the quintessentially British virtue of going its own eccentric way. The past decade's winners alone have helped to familiarize American readers with Kazuo Ishiguro ("The Remains of the Day"), Michael Ondaatje ("The English Patient"), and Arundhati Roy ("The God of Small Things").

Sometimes, however, the right writer is tapped for the wrong book. Pat Barker won in 1995, for the third novel in her World War One trilogy, when she should have won for the first; similarly, "Waterland," which put Graham Swift on the map in 1983, was passed over, and he wasn't recognized until 1996, with "Last Orders." This year, which marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Booker, the prize was awarded to "Amsterdam" (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday; $21), by Ian McEwan: a case in point. He was inexplicably overlooked last year, when he published "Enduring Love," a tale of obsession and lives colliding in the wake of a freak accident, and probably his best novel to date. Although Lord Hurd,

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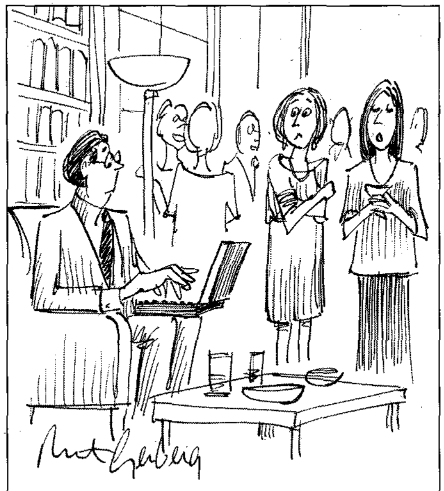

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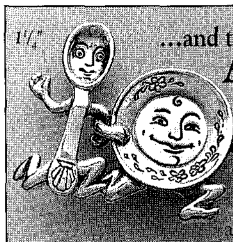

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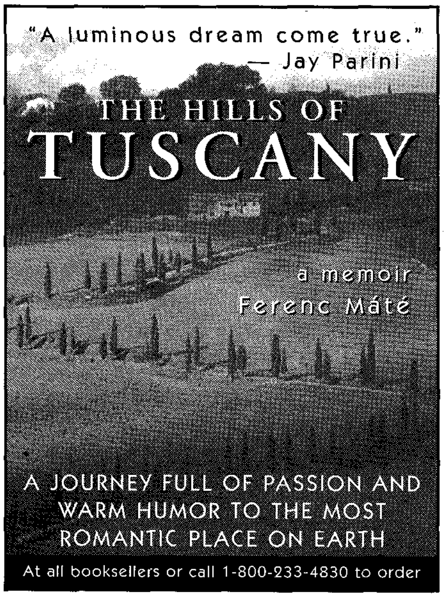
a former Foreign Secretary, who is the chairman of the awards, openly conceded at the black-tie ceremony in the Guildhall that "there was no masterpiece which was absolutely bound to sweep all before it," I came to "Amsterdam" with high hopes. McEwan, who was once known as Ian Macabre because of the casually dire atmosphere of his early fiction (in his first novel, "The Cement Garden," four children descend into uncensored primitivism after burying their mother in the cellar), is one of England's consistently interesting fiction writers. At fifty, he has published seven novels and two collections of short stories, all of them concerned in one way or another with the lurking seduction of incivility. In McEwan's universe, the forces of darkness sit side by side with us at the breakfast table, and those who intend to deceive often come with the sweetest smiles, like the gracious-seeming couple who lure a pair of tourists into their monstrous erotic games in "The Comfort of Strangers" (short-listed in 1981). All the same, McEwan is more difficult to place as a writer than, say, a Martin Amis or an Anita Brookner, in part because his pliant voice adapts itself to the requirements of his characters; he has less need to impose himself on his fictional worlds than many of his contemporaries do. This is not to suggest that McEwan is unrecognizable from book to book: he writes a distinctively unadorned prose that speeds the reader along, but slows every so often for a layered, luxuriant image—like an Eastern sky that had "lost its vivid purple . . . fading by degrees through nursery blue to diluted milk."

"Amsterdam" has some of the standard McEwan touches—the blunt writing warmed by lyrical bursts, and an outlook that tends to the acidic. The novel begins with a funeral, at which two old acquaintances meet: Clive Linley, a successful composer who has been commissioned to write a millennial symphony that he hopes will be his magnum opus, and Vernon Halliday, the ambitious but insecure editor of a daily paper. Both men have been lovers of the tragically deceased Molly Lane—"restaurant critic, gorgeous wit, and photographer"—and neither of them has any use for Molly's husband, George, "the sad, rich publisher who doted on her and whom, to everyone's surprise, she had not left." Also present at the funeral is another of Molly's overachieving lovers: Julian Garmony, an arch-conservative Foreign Secretary and the sort of stone-hearted Thatcherite who once opined in an undergraduate speech that Nelson Mandela deserved to be hanged. Clive, in one of McEwan's perception-packed asides, muses on what Garmony's allure might have been: "High office had eroded his ability to talk levelly with a stranger. Perhaps that was what he offered her in bed, the thrill of the impersonal. A man twitching in front of mirrors."

The funeral sets in motion a tightly coiled plot, which unfurls like a fast-forwarded Iris Murdoch novel. It turns out that Garmony has a dirty, not so little secret (or, depending on your viewpoint, humanizing folly) that has been captured in a series of incriminating photos taken by Molly. These are now in the possession of George, who happens to own stock in Vernon's paper, the *Judge*, and makes them available to the editor. Vernon hopes that the scandal will help boost the *Judge's* flagging circulation while deluding himself that his real motive is to eject a bad egg from the upper ranks of a corrupt government. Vernon, the sort of man who is "simply the sum of all the people who had listened to him," turns to Clive for validation over a dinner of *poussins* and good Burgundy, only to find that his friend might as well be one of his lily-livered employees: "Clive tilted back on his chair and clasped his hands behind his head. 'I think,' he said carefully, 'your staff is right. It's a really terrible idea.' " The two men part acrimoniously, and from there the novel escalates into a dastardly farce in which the revenge motif doubles and triples back on itself.

"Amsterdam" is a one-finger exercise, by a writer gifted enough to get away with it. The novel wears its erudition lightly: there are quick, subliminal echoes of Yeats and Larkin; a reference to Clive's having borrowed his musical concepts from "some unpublished and highly speculative essays by a colleague of Noam Chomsky's," and a wonderful moment when Vernon dresses down his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deputy foreign editor for running an item on an exhibit of pottery shards in Ankara with the curt remark "Paradigm shifts in broken pots aren't news, Frank." McEwan gives his characters thinking room, which is different from simply providing them with personalities. Clive's thoughts could be only his: the thoughts of an eminent composer momentarily besieged by doubts about the notes he has scored ("Almost right, almost the truth. They suggested a dry yearning for something out of reach") and the next minute buoyed by the conviction of his own talent. Here, as in "Enduring Love," where the narrator is a science writer, McEwan gives us something we get surprisingly little of in contemporary novels. We get a sense, that is, of what it's like to be seriously engaged with work, whether it's the prosaic involvement with office colleagues and their tics ("the literary editor, who had never before been in early enough to attend a morning conference, gave a somnolent account of a novel about food") or the lunging after an elusive quarry that constitutes creative labor such as Clive's: "It was only a bridging passage to the finale; what fascinated him was the promise, the aspiration—he imagined it as a set of ancient worn steps turning gently out of sight."

Although "Amsterdam" begins and ends with death, it is one of McEwan's sunniest efforts—a slim jeu d'esprit. The author himself has called the book an "entertainment," and there's no denying that it feels slight, especially after "Enduring Love." That novel combined the fluid storytelling skill on display in "Amsterdam" with a deeper uneasy-making embrace of the pathological. You can see how its author might have needed to go a bit lighter the next time around, if only to spell himself from his own intensity. "Amsterdam," which is an intelligent beach read for the gray days of winter, must have come as a relief, in both its conception and its writing. Go ahead and enjoy it; then, when you're in the mood to have your peace disturbed, hunker down with "Enduring Love." ♦

It's like the old song says, love is a many-splintered thing. Most of us have several such splinters embedded in our hearts that can still make us wince when memory happens to prod them.—*Buffalo News.*

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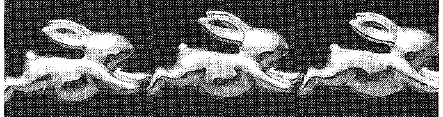

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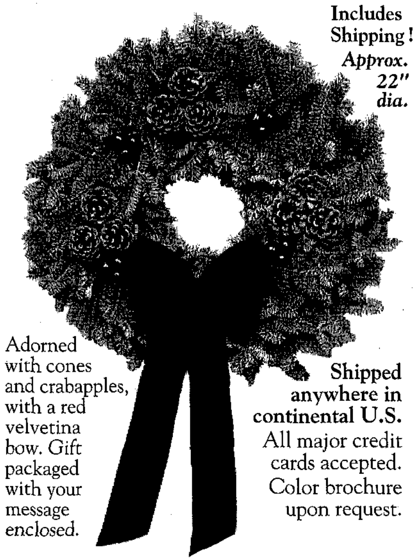

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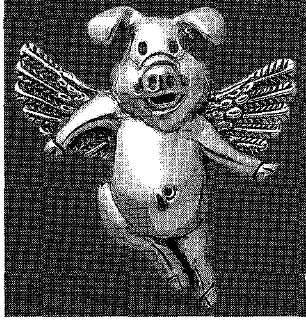

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BRIEFLY NOTED

Tomato Red, by Daniel Woodrell (Holt; $20). Sammy Barlach, an Ozark drifter on easy terms with misfortune ("Anyway, blah-blah, I've slept in the Ford before"), falls in with a whore named Bev, her daughter, Jamalee, and her dangerously handsome "country queer" son, Jason. With Sammy signing on as muscle, they hatch various misbegotten schemes to escape trailer-park fates (hairdressing, hustling), while Woodrell's down-home version of Chandleresque prose lends a near-Biblical dignity to the criminal doings. ("The color she applied I couldn't name, though it was in the pink tradition.")

The Giant, O'Brien, by Hilary Mantel (Holt; $22). In 1782, with a small band of his fellow starving Irish, the nearly eight-foot-tall Charles O'Brien heads for London to make his fortune as a travelling freak. There his path intersects with that of a renowned surgeon who tore the legs off bugs as a boy; as an adult, he is a dissector of freakish corpses and collector of their bones. More to the author's point, Charlie is art—all imagination and heart—and the surgeon is science. The rest of the world is merely heartless in the pitiless design of this wrenching, if poetic, historical fantasy.

Mr. White's Confession, by Robert Clark (Picador; $24). Against a black-and-white backdrop of nineteen-thirties movies, dime-a-dance halls, and the shantytowns of Depression-era St. Paul, Clark, whose preoccupations are purgatorial, lets loose his figures of Good, Evil, and Bafflement. The murder of a redhead triggers the story, but it's the long ruminations of blameless Mr. White, a huge galoot whose memory problems turn him into a "recording angel," that give the book its intensity and mystery.

Dragonfly: NASA and the Crisis Aboard Mir, by Bryan Burrough (HarperCollins; $26.95). This account of a joint Russo-American space project is frightening, informative, and silkily readable. NASA put seven American astronauts, in succession, aboard the dilapidated Russian space station Mir for longer periods than Americans had ever spent in space. Burrough conveys all the ambiguities that afflicted a program which was ostensibly scientific but essentially political and diplomatic, and his persuasive portraits show how the claustrophobic working conditions, punctuated by calamity (a fire, a toxic leak, and a collision), aggravated personality problems and culture clashes.

Tibor Kalman: Perverse Optimist, edited by Peter Hall and Michael Bierut (Princeton Architectural Press; $60). A witty, eclectic tome of images and writings—half catalogue, half manifesto—spanning the career of the graphic designer Tibor Kalman, the man behind Benetton's *Colors* magazine; a Communist-theme apartment building called Red Square that hastened gentrification on the Lower East Side while seeming to subvert it; and the new Forty-second Street, for which he claims full responsibility. Kalman creates powerful, unprecedented, sometimes haphazard imagery (Ronald Reagan with AIDS, a saint having an orgasm), but always for commercial purposes (to sell sweaters).

The Birth of Empire: DeWitt Clinton and the American Experience, 1769-1828, by Evan Cornog (Oxford; $45). This insightful historical biography shows DeWitt Clinton, both as mayor of New York City and as governor of New York State, solving the technological, political, and financial problems that threatened the completion, in 1826, of the Erie Canal—"the grandest public works project of the nineteenth century." Clinton proves to be more admirable than likable: a high-minded but charmless politician who struggled as the many took power from the few and as political parties gained ascendancy over a handful of great families. In Cornog's telling, the life and times of DeWitt Clinton make a fascinating guide to the complex interaction of personality, popularity, and policy in our infant republic.

W. Eugene Smith: Photographs 1934-1975, edited by Gilles Mora and John T. Hill (Abrams; $75). Working for *Life* in its mid-century heyday, Eugene Smith practiced the photographer's equivalent of literary nonfiction, immersing himself for weeks, even months at a time, in the lives and surroundings of his subjects—a Colorado country doctor, Welsh coal miners, Albert Schweitzer in Africa. Tired of fighting editors over presentation, he quit in 1955, devoting himself to epic projects such as a portrait of Pittsburgh and a heartrending series on the effects of industrial pollution in Japan. This volume shows Smith's uncompromising aesthetic sensibility in the service of an abiding and increasingly ambitious humanism.

The Folding Cliffs, by W. S. Merwin (Knopf; $25). With this ravishing historical narrative of late-nineteenth-century Hawaii, Merwin restores the epic to our language. When Ko'olau, a cowboy, and his little son, Kaleimanu, contract leprosy, Ko'olau and his wife, Pi'ilani, resist the official policy, which is to remove the sick from their families. Instead, first in company and then on their own, they flee into the wild mountains of Kauai. Merwin's fluid lines transmit with almost hallucinatory beauty this story's dark lessons.

Halfway Down the Hall, by Rachel Hadas (Wesleyan; $35 cloth, $17.95 paper). This extensive collection of old and new work emphasizes Hadas's probing sensibility and formal dexterity. Her intimate poems—which take as their subjects everything from Sappho to her son's hat—suggest that living is the most exacting art, one which requires not only self-examination but graciousness in the face of all fortune. Even a childhood paperweight, discovered as the poet contemplates a recent loss, consoles us with "the enduring myth / of something precious going on and on, / here on the table, solid, warm with sun, / this strangely fragrant stone."

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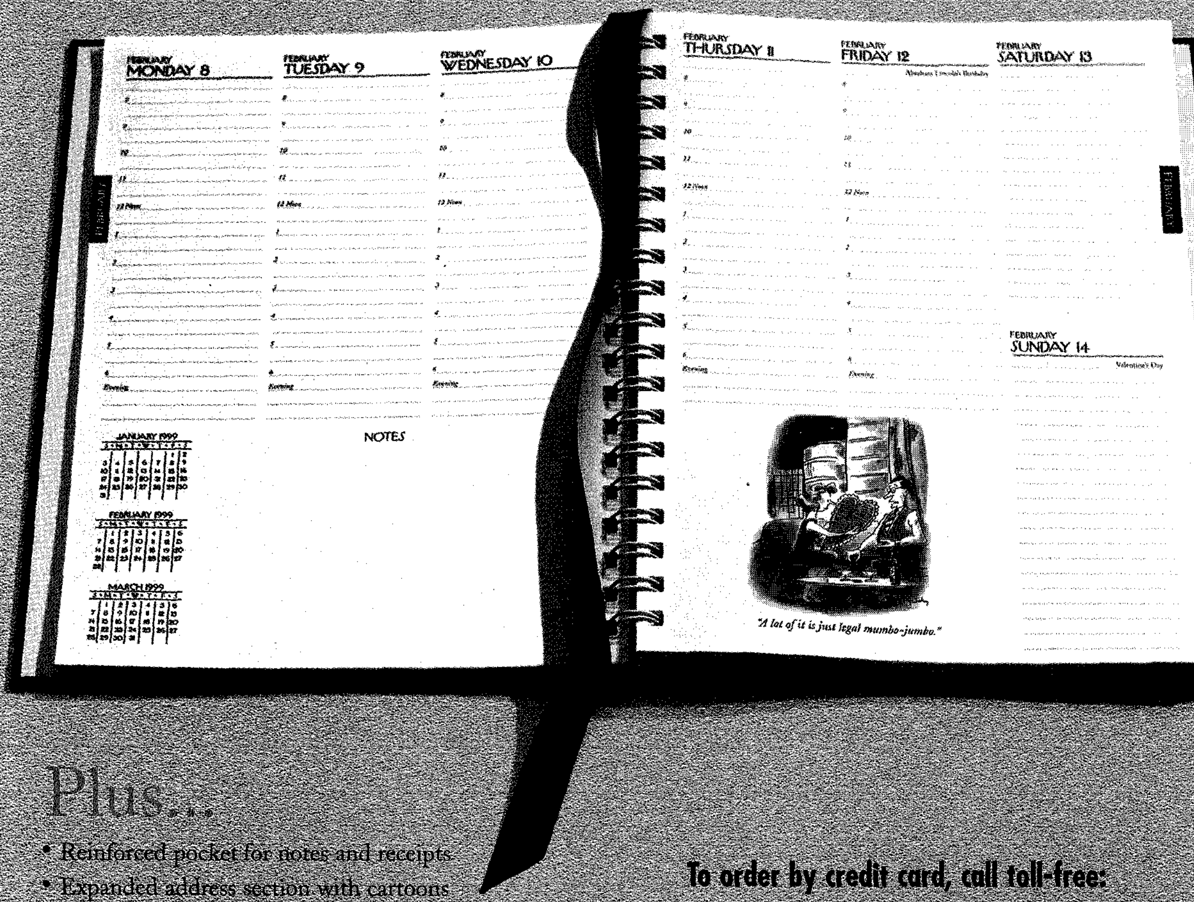
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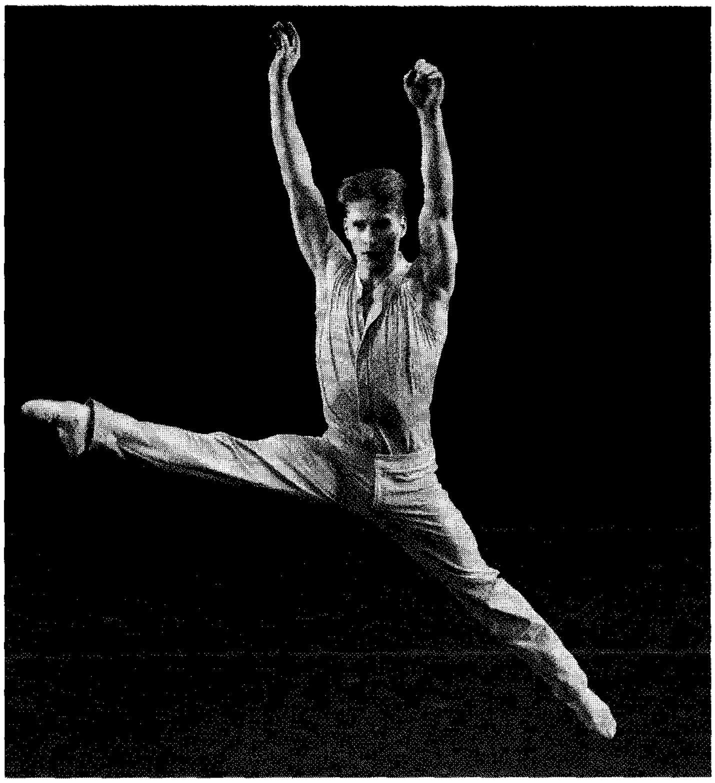
GOING WILD

Controlled anarchy and self-abandon in Twyla Tharp's "Known by Heart."

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

PEOPLE keep telling us that, if there are no good new ballets being made, at least we can enjoy the dancers—their virtuosity, their personalities, their development as they take over roles in old ballets. But it doesn't work that way. Most dancers don't develop, or not into anything interesting, unless choreographers are making interesting new roles for them. You don't get a Suzanne Farrell without a George Balanchine, or a Margot Fonteyn without a Frederick Ashton.



Becoming a man: Ethan Stiefel moves beyond mere technique to discover a glorious new solidity.

PAUL KOLNIK

The process, I guess, is basically psychological: the experience of being singled out, fussed over. But from there it quickly becomes technical. Worked on, the dancer works—gives up old habits, even cherished strengths, in order to move into new territory. Most young dancers have some special gift. One has speed; one, delicacy; another, stage presence. It's there from their teens. It's who they are. But the virtue has to be bent—even, by a sort of ballet Zen, damped down—for the dancer to get serious. That's why Balanchine used to practice cross-type casting. We'd arrive at the theatre and open our programs and say, "What? Her? As Dew Drop? What is he thinking of?" What he was thinking of was developing the dancer, and also capitalizing on the energy generated, the bang in the test tube, when molecules meet molecules they weren't meant to combine with. But most company directors are too hurried—and too concerned about criticism—to do this. The little skittery girl gets to be Dew Drop, the big chesty guy gets to be the Prince, and

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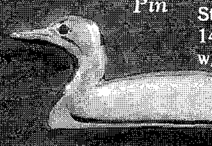

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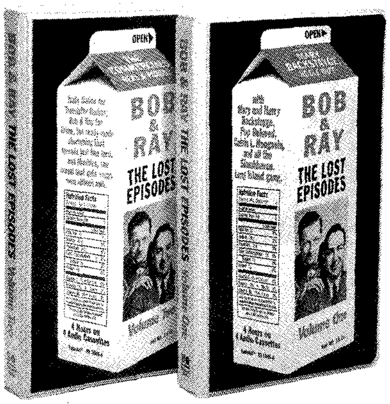
everybody settles back into the easy chair of his or her specialty. In this way, dancers become "personalities" rather than artists. It's not for nothing that New York City Ballet and American Ballet Theatre, both of them hard up for new choreography, are now doing their best work in narrative or character ballets.

But during A.B.T.'s recent season at City Center we saw how the process can work otherwise. There are a few people who are still making ballets worth watching, and Twyla Tharp, albeit fitfully, is one of them. Her new piece, "Known by Heart," is the best thing that A.B.T. has commissioned in years. It's classic Tharp. As usual, the score is a collage, this one including Mozart's "Danse Allemande," Steve Reich's "#1-Six Pianos," and some can-banging by Donald Knaack, a follower of John Cage's. As usual, the cast is divided into little squadrons that tear around, doing their own thing and ignoring the others. And again classical ballet is combined with rock and roll, snake hips, even some folk dance this time, plus Tharp's beloved vaudeville shtick—people clobbering each other on the head, people gesturing to the audience as if to say, "What's with this dame?"

So "Known by Heart" is familiar territory. It's Tharp's controlled anarchy—her America, I believe—but it was very nice to be there again, and nicer still, it seems, for the dancers. Tharp is our most famous "crossover" choreographer (from modern dance to ballet), but, however many ballets she's made, she still has an outsider's view of classical dance. She is still awed by it, amused by it, a connoisseur of it. And, like a connoisseur, she is always turning it over in her hands and showing you this or that little thing about it. At one point in "Known by Heart," she has the excellent Keith Roberts do an arabesque allongée (stretched-out arabesque) with his back to the audience. It's not polite to do an arabesque allongée this way: the audience is looking straight up your rear end. Yet to view the step from the back is to see more clearly than ever its splendid architecture, its classical beauty: this pylon here, that projectile there, earth and air happily married. Roberts seemed to know this, for he did a superbly clean, long, strong arabesque. He was on; he had something interesting to do.

But that's nothing compared with what Tharp gives the ballet's central couple, Susan Jaffe and Ethan Stiefel:



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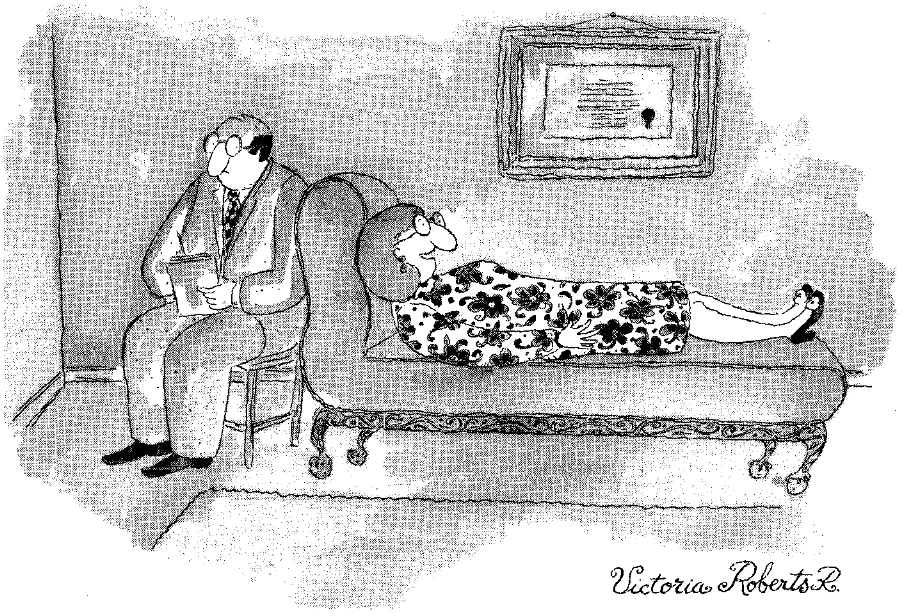
a stormy romance (much invisible-door slamming), a high-wire duet, and a pair of breathtaking solos. Stiefel's solo, in particular, is a miracle. I haven't seen Tharp create anything so packed, so explosive, so giddy with the joy of what ballet can do and what her dancer can do—Stiefel lands from a jump in third position on half point (don't ask, just know that even Stiefel wavered)—since the big solo that she made for Baryshnikov in her 1976 "Push Comes to Shove." Both Jaffe and Stiefel are problem dancers, in a way. Jaffe was the up-and-coming grand ballerina of A.B.T. in the eighties, but she never quite came. She always seemed held back, genteel. You could tell there was a there there. In 1995, when Suzanne Farrell coached her in "Mozartiana" for a program of Balanchine ballets at the Kennedy Center, in Washington, she seemed to come alive—to heat up, expand, fill the ballet's skin—but then she returned to New York and resumed her impersonation of a Catholic schoolgirl. Stiefel shows a similar reserve. Not technically, God knows: at twenty-five, he is probably the most advanced male ballet dancer in the world. (If his solo reminded one of a Baryshnikov number, that is because he reminds one of Baryshnikov. He was a pupil of the Russian dancer's.) He can do almost anything, and watching him do it is like reading Aldous Huxley's descriptions of looking at foliage when you're on mescaline: you see the edges, the joins, the undersides, everything. But Stiefel is dry. Some part of him is still a ballet student, a step-doer. He needs to take full charge of his roles—to be the star, put the ballet across.

That's what he did in "Known by Heart," and so did Jaffe. They took over, raised hell. They couldn't not; Tharp built this into the ballet. I don't think she was trying to teach them a lesson. Tharp's heroines are always take-no-guff types, but what a relief to see Jaffe become one: stick her nose in the air, tap-dance on point, take pleasure in herself. As for her partner, Tharp has always specialized in making men look butch, but how wonderful to watch her cast this spell on Stiefel. It wasn't just a matter of his doing tough-guy things: shadowboxing, ballerina-hauling. His body changed. He seemed to weigh twenty pounds more than he did the night before, in Ashton's "Les Patineurs." And you could feel his weight, feel the upward-downward tension in the thigh as he lifted it. Combine that heft with the delicate, nit-picking footwork that Tharp gave him, and add to this his excited effort—though he is proud, you could see how hard he was working—and you had quite a spectacle. The beautiful boy, the skinny teen-ager we have watched with joy for ten years: he is a man.

"Known by Heart" shed its blessing on everyone. Julie Kent, with jewels in her hair, glowed like a fairy. Angel Corella stopped grinning (eventually) and danced his steps more carefully than I have ever seen him do. Griff Braun,



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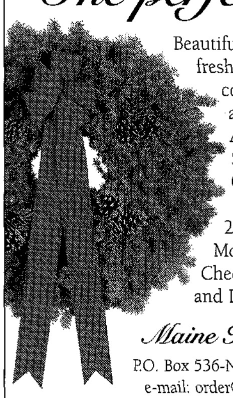

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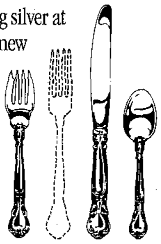

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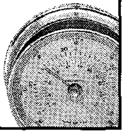

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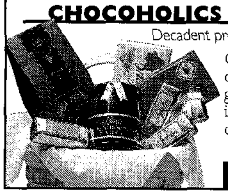

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Marcelo Gomes, and Sean Stewart, in soloist roles, seemed to be breathing pure oxygen, and, though Gomes and Stewart may have overdanced a little, I don't blame them. I would have, too. In 1988, when Baryshnikov was the artistic director of A.B.T., he put Tharp on staff. She stayed for two years. In today's no-money climate, such an arrangement is probably not possible, but the company must get more ballets from Tharp, if only for the sake of the dancers.

A.B.T. could save some money by bringing in fewer ballets from Europe. This season, in addition to "Known by Heart," the troupe acquired "Without Words," a new ballet, to Schubert, by Nacho Duato, the artistic director of Madrid's National Dance Company; and "Spring and Fall," to Dvořák, by John Neumeier, the head of the Hamburg Ballet. The Duato is one of those unspecified-group-sorrow ballets descended from Antony Tudor's "Dark Elegies," which A.B.T. has in repertory. The Neumeier is a youth-greets-spring ballet descended from I don't know what—some ancient cliché—but it sure looks a lot like Jiří Kylián's "Sinfonietta," which, again, A.B.T. has in repertory. (One night this season, "Spring and Fall" and "Sinfonietta" appeared on the same program. We saw the same ballet twice in a row, by two different choreographers.) So why did A.B.T. need these updates, both of them in that corny, self-consciously lumpen, we-do-ballet-but-we're-still-human style so popular in Europe today?

Some relief was offered by way of John Selya's "Disposition," to Shostakovich—a big Spanishy ballet (lots of red tutus) in which, while the lead male, Marcelo Gomes, was doing a big Spanishy ballet, the lead female, played by Ashley Tuttle, was having a nervous breakdown. (In the middle of their pas de deux, she tried to run offstage. He hauled her back, with no interruption of his Latin dignity.) Selya, a much loved corps dancer with A.B.T., has performed in a lot of Tharp's ballets, and "Disposition" shows her influence. In a small way, it does for Tuttle, another ladylike type, what "Known by Heart" does for Jaffe—it asks her to go nuts. And it is witty and cute. After our dunking in European earnestness, it cleared our sinuses. These days, A.B.T. should buy American. Let the Europeans do the spring-greeting; we'll do the ballet, or we'll try. ♦

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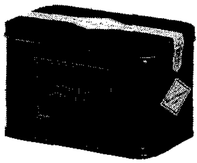

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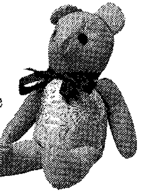

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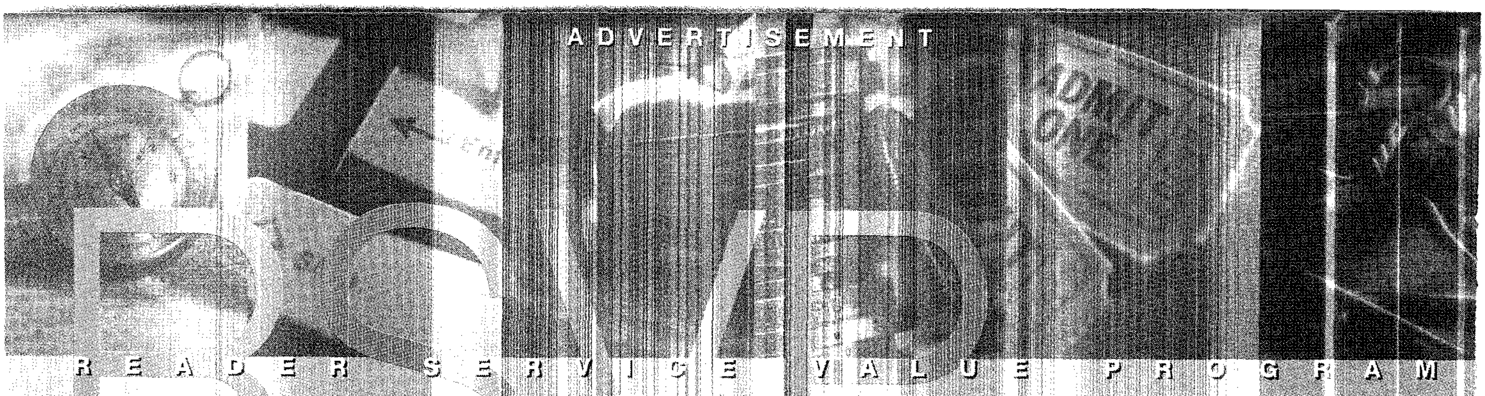

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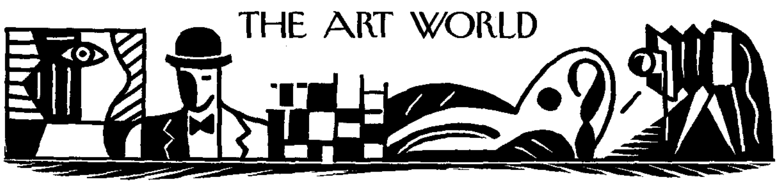
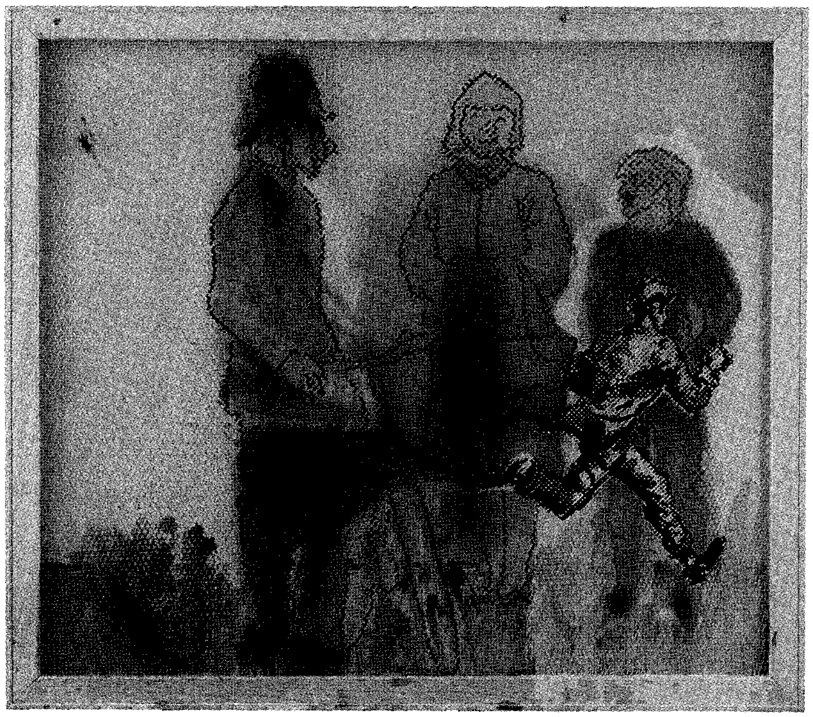


THE TRASHMASTER

How Sigmar Polke rescued painting from the ashes.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

I MET the confounding genius Sigmar Polke at the 1986 Venice Biennale, where the opening of the German pavilion, with a show of colossal paintings by him, was a paparazzi-freaked mob scene. Normally reclusive, the chubby, elfin artist had made an exception for the event. He wore a vast Hawaiian shirt and green satin trousers, and shouldered a massive movie camera, which he whirred at everyone who tried to photograph him. That must have been an amusing film—if the camera was loaded.


Polke's "Untitled" (1998): Inspiration from sleazy cartoons, sci-fi, and psychedelia.

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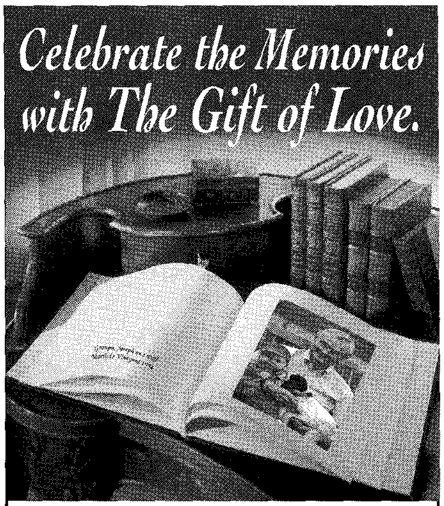
When we were introduced, Polke acknowledged an essay in which I had written of "primordial fear" as an aspect of his art. But no sooner was he cordial than his cordiality (to an art critic!) palpably galled him. Making like a bug-eyed maniac, he thrust his face in mine. "Are you really . . . *frigh*-tened?" he roared. As he spun away—back into a party that, in retrospect, seems to me the climax of the nineteen-eighties art craze—I was already cherishing my memory of the moment.

I haven't seen Polke since, but he is regularly in my thoughts about contemporary art. Fifty-seven years old, Polke lives in Cologne, from where he has sent the tricky, gorgeous new paintings, in synthetic resin on polyester, that, at the Michael Werner Gallery, constitute his first substantial New York show since a retrospective at the Brooklyn Museum in 1991. Though nothing here is terribly novel for him, the show finds the artist in peak form: wild and canny, rapturous and sardonic, unstoppable.

In a scorekeeping mood, one could easily argue that Polke and his countryman Gerhard Richter (known for varieties of Photo-Realist and abstract



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work) are the most important painters of the past three decades. With Anselm Kiefer, Georg Baselitz, and a host of piquant minor figures, they belong to a German painting culture that has often outshone its American equivalent during this period. Not that the comparison is widely made: ignorance, due partly to patriotic chagrin, still dogs this particular German miracle.

In 1963, at the height of the New York art world's imperial afflatus, Polke and Richter, in Düsseldorf, helped hatch an obscure mini-movement in response to American Pop art. They dubbed it Capitalist Realism. Both were from East Germany, an aesthetic backwater of Socialist Realism, and both were affected by the ex-Luftwaffe pilot Joseph Beuys's radical shamanism—a holy foolishness laced with postwar sackcloth and ashes. Before parting ways in accord with their drastically opposed temperaments, they painted sibling sorts of acridly funny, obdurately mysterious pictures based on media-derived photography and design.

Almost no New Yorker knew of their work until 1980 or so, when it emerged as a decisive influence on the brash painting revival called Neo-Expressionism. Painting had seemed at a dead end here since the intimidating coups of Andy Warhol and minimalism—gold Marilyns, monochrome geometries—in the sixties. In Germany, Polke and Richter had turned the apparent cul-de-sac to sensational account, making painting's alleged death the ironic theme of revelatory works.

Since the mid-sixties, Polke and Richter have been in truth what Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns have been in fond American ascription: the antic brawn and the majestic brain of late-twentieth-century pictorial imagination. Leading New York Neo-Expressionists, including Julian Schnabel and David Salle, recycled the Germans' double-jointed—at once sarcastic and Romantic—spirit. Polke and Richter wrested avant-gardist initiative in painting from a too long complacent New York.

They did so with an audacity that was uniquely possible in Germany's art culture, whose archaic spiritual investment in the figure of the artist as prophet, wizard, jester, and/or sacred monster was still intact. The tradition took on special intensity in the sixties, with a surge of national confidence. From the blandly

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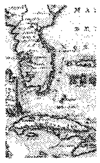

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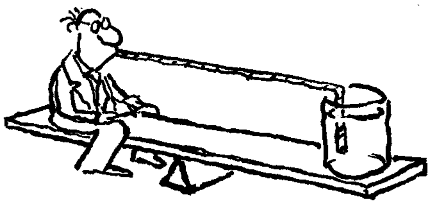
professionalized precincts of American art, that magical, folkish bent looks enviable, albeit nerve-racking. (It does not conduce to wonderful politics.) From the start, Polke played it like a piano.

He attacked painting as if he meant to trash it. He painted on tacky, non-canvas fabrics—printed tablecloths, for instance—with a witches' brew of non-paint chemicals. He used a graffiti-like method of overlaid line drawing taken from Francis Picabia—modern art's No. 1 bad boy, whose reputation, lately resurrected, owes a lot to Polke's applications of him. Polke's representational motifs arrived from sleazy cartoons, science fiction, psychedelia, and hippie mysticism.



"Higher powers command: paint the upper right corner black!" reads the inscription on a 1969 canvas whose upper-right corner is painted black. A painting from 1968, captioned "Modern Art," offers insouciant swatches of geometry, squiggles, and a splash of flung paint: one-stop shopping for a century's worth of styles. Polke's view of art could seem Olympian and scabrous, part apotheosis and part giggling fit. He kept making messes in the studio, and the art of painting kept rather gloriously rising from them, phoenix fashion.

IN the main room at the Werner Gallery are fourteen paintings, measuring four by five feet, that glisten with orangeish, lacquerlike stuff. Three more, of the same size, hang in the gallery's office. As often with Polke, the series has an air of being a calculated, cash-and-carry product line. But then so does a lot of Monet: whatever motivates a master to produce is a boon to everybody. The paintings are essentially abstract, but they don't feel abstract. They feature, besides passages of figurative drawing, a real-world aura that points to their sources in commercially printed photography and illustration. The works' subject, Polke says, is printing errors: tiny glitches in photographic reproduction gleaned from newspapers and magnified to surreal effect. It is typical of this mys-

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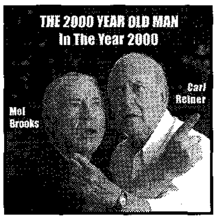

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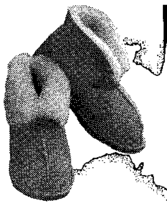

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tagogic artist to treat chance industrial goofs as if they were tea-leaf oracles.

When Polke's resinous medium is applied thinly, it turns its polyester ground transparent, like greasy paper. Marks may show through from the fabric's back, and shadows of marks may be visible on the wall. Some fabrics are iridescent. Many look webbed with chicken wire—actually, gold-string mesh. Vaporous beauty dances, in a viewer's eye, with tawdry glitz.

The pictures' designs are grid-happy. The anarchic Polke dotes on symbols of order the way that outlaws owe their identity to laws. Besides the mesh, there are painted patterns of Benday dots and raster (the substructure of TV and digital imaging). The show invites degrees of scrutiny ranging from closeup to microscopic. One painting bears an overlay drawing of carbon molecules ("Life's building blocks," science writers never fail to note). Another presents the image of a strolling man who is, appropriately, a little person.

Polke's surfaces glow, variously, like stained glass, hard candy, and flesh. You keep trying to decide what you're looking at. Something sacred can seem entangled with something devilish, as in "Break Domination," which contains an image, blown up from a medieval manuscript, of a creature that's part human, part animal, and part vegetable. Religious transport seesaws with lowdown hilarity. That's where the primordial fear comes in.

Imagine retreating to the inner sanctum of your aloneness—the twilit fundament of self-consciousness beneath coherent thought and feeling—and suddenly hearing a cackle of not very friendly laughter in your ear. Hello, Herr Polke. A few other artists accomplish such spiritual breaking and entering. I think of Goya, and so does Polke, who elsewhere has hauntingly adapted some notably sinister Goya motifs. Now imagine a contemporary Goya wielding tropes of Dada and Pop art, along with the attitude of a mean clown. This is hard to do—except while looking at Polke's work, in which fancy hits with the force of fact. ♦

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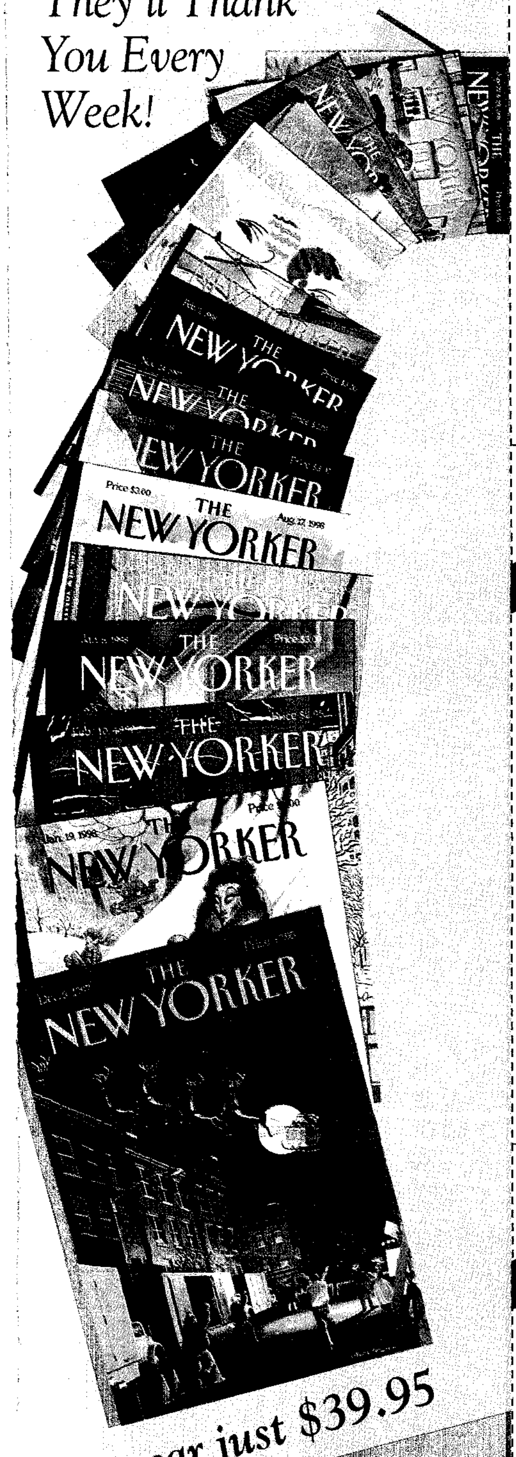

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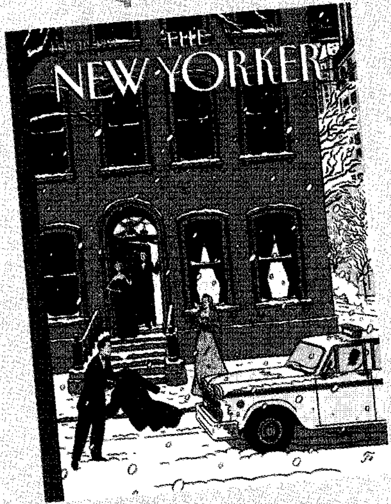

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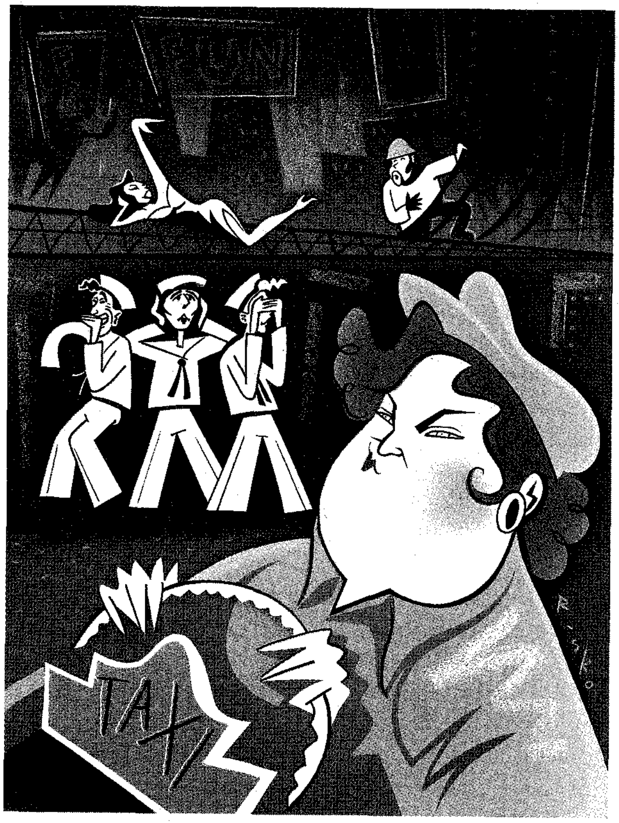
THE THEATRE

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Half a century later, still a town worth singing about.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

IT'S one of the mysteries of life that "On the Town," with a score by Leonard Bernstein, choreography by Jerome Robbins, and a book and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, isn't in constant revival in New York. Why aren't the words "now and forever" attached to *it* instead of to "Cats"? It tells a classic New York story; it has elements that anyone who has ever lived in or visited the city, regardless of age, class, or color, can recognize and identify with; and among its many wonderful tunes there is at least one song ("New York, New York"—the "helluva town" one, not to be confused with the bombastic Kander and Ebb anthem that Sinatra branded into our brains) that has the power to make any listener feel part of a mythical world of perpetual optimism. Strong stuff—and yet "On the Town," despite some priceless moments, never quite quickens into something magical. It's smart, funny, and a triumph of talent. (Very young talent—all the creators of the 1944 musical were in their twenties.) But the show has always been hard to love, because it's really not about the characters, or even about the city, but about an idea of the city, about a way of looking at the world. Much of its poignance is conceptual—general rather than particular. The story revolves around three sailors in town on twenty-four-hour leave on a spring day in 1944, and, while they have names and personalities, they could just as effectively be called Sailors No. 1, 2, and 3. (This is true in the 1949 M-G-M version as well, even though two of the sailors are played by stars: Frank Sinatra and Gene Kelly. If they are at all memorable in these roles, it is only because they are, after all, Sinatra and Kelly; their roles, and their performances, are as generic as the sailor suits they wear.)



Lea DeLaria steals the show as a brassy, bulldozer taxi-driver in George C. Wolfe's Big Apple.

ROBERT RISKO

"On the Town" had its origins in a Jerome Robbins–Leonard Bernstein ballet called "Fancy Free"; to turn it into a musical, Bernstein and Robbins enlisted the services of Comden and Green, who had been writing for and

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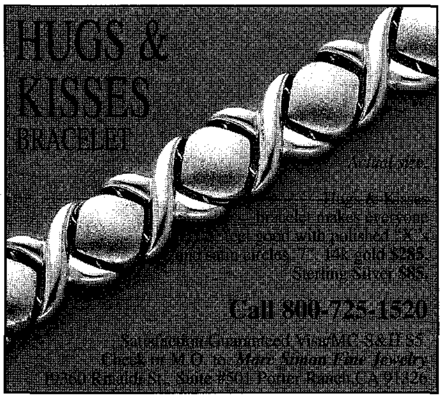

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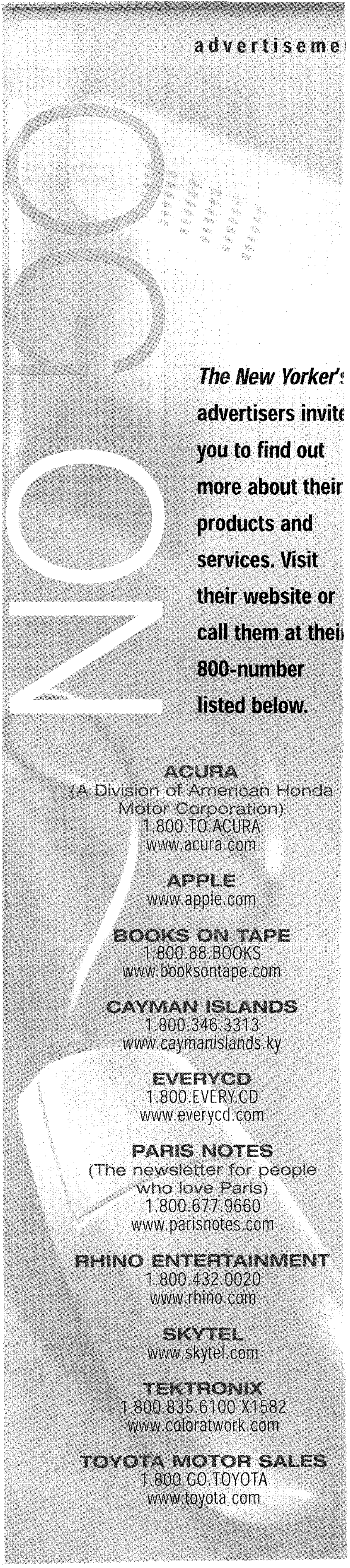
performing with a group they'd formed in Greenwich Village called The Revuers (which included Judy Holliday). Essentially, "On the Town" plays like a revue—a series of sketches, full of sophisticated sentiment and sophisticated nonsense, that illustrate variations on a theme.

Now, for the first time since 1971, "On the Town" is back on Broadway, in a much scrutinized production under the direction of George C. Wolfe. The scrutiny began in the summer of 1997, when Wolfe presented the musical in Central Park, and took the daring step of jettisoning the Robbins choreography in favor of new work by Eliot Feld. The dancing received less than flattering reviews, and Feld was booted before work on the Broadway production began. In the following months, many candidates auditioned for the job. Christopher d'Amboise came on board, then left after two months; finally, last spring, Wolfe put his confidence in Keith Young, who has a background in modern dance and had choreographed for Madonna, "The Drew Carey Show," and "The Parent Trap" but never for Broadway. At the last minute, Joey McKneely ("The Life") was brought in as a dance doctor. The cumulative result is a reversal of the gallows medical joke: the operation was not a success, but the patient didn't die.

In interviews, Wolfe has focussed on his desire to bring out the joy in the show, and in its best moments this "On the Town" is bursting with joy. You won't find it in the dancing, though; in fact, as you recall the performance you may forget that there *was* any dancing. There's a lot of activity on the stage, a lot of physical business, but most of the motion comes across as commotion, and there's very little sense of true movement—of meaningful striving for a look, a line, or a gesture. The dancers don't seem to have compelling reasons to go where they go; they seem yanked around. Still, Wolfe has put on a very handsome, winning show: the orchestra is suspended in midair, above the action, across the span of the Brooklyn Bridge, which covers the entire width of the stage, yet never seems



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intrusive; changing backdrops of enlarged pastel-tinted postcards show scenes of New York in the forties; and there is at least one performance that is itself a classic New York moment—the kind in which, while you're just sitting there watching the scenes pass by, you suddenly become aware of your great good luck in being alive right here, right now.

The moment is provided by Lea DeLaria, who plays Hildy, the brassy bulldozer of a taxi-driver. It's her Broadway début, and her every move annouces the arrival of a phenomenon, but never to anyone else's detriment. The characters all have a jack-in-the-box quality anyway: they pop up here and there, whenever a certain kind of effect is called for, and the writing of their parts (if not of the story) virtually invites performers to go over the top. DeLaria is loud and uninhibited as Hildy (she's like that, I gather, as a standup comic, which is her prior claim to fame), and she uses her considerable roundness to gleeful, but not cartoonish, effect. The gale force with which she states her intention of nailing one of the sailors in "Come Up to My Place" is hilarious, but DeLaria isn't grabby about stealing the show, and there's an unexpected aura of tenderness about her; she manages to make the bossy Hildy the most moving character we meet. One other actor, Mary Testa, also earned my undying gratitude, with her brilliant portrayal of a singing teacher who is intent on maintaining both her dipsomania and her dignity; her girdled propriety and transparent looniness bring to mind the great, matronly comic character actresses of the thirties and forties. It's a performance of perfectly modulated absurdity, at a level that only the most talented can pull off.

Perhaps because the show's main characters are virtually interchangeable—or maybe because the casting isn't what it should be—the actors playing secondary roles do a better job than the leads of catching the city's jackhammer energy and its welcome-wagon approach to eccentricity. Of the three sailors, only Jesse Tyler Ferguson, a gangly redhead, has enough presence to make you care about him—to make you aware that he is a young man about to go off to war. Perry Laylon Ojeda, as Gabey, has no voice to speak of (or to sing of); even during the quiet and haunting "Lonely Town" you have to strain to hear him over the muted orchestra when he hits the crucial word "love." And the performance of Tai Jimenez as Miss Turnstiles goes—all too appropriately—in one ear and out the other. In the end, though, the unevenness of the cast and the weak dancing don't destroy the spirit here, which is alive in the brash, confident music and lyrics, and in the sense of our being participants in a glorious passing parade. It may not be easy to locate "On the Town"'s heart, but Wolfe has succeeded in finding its still vital pulse. ♦

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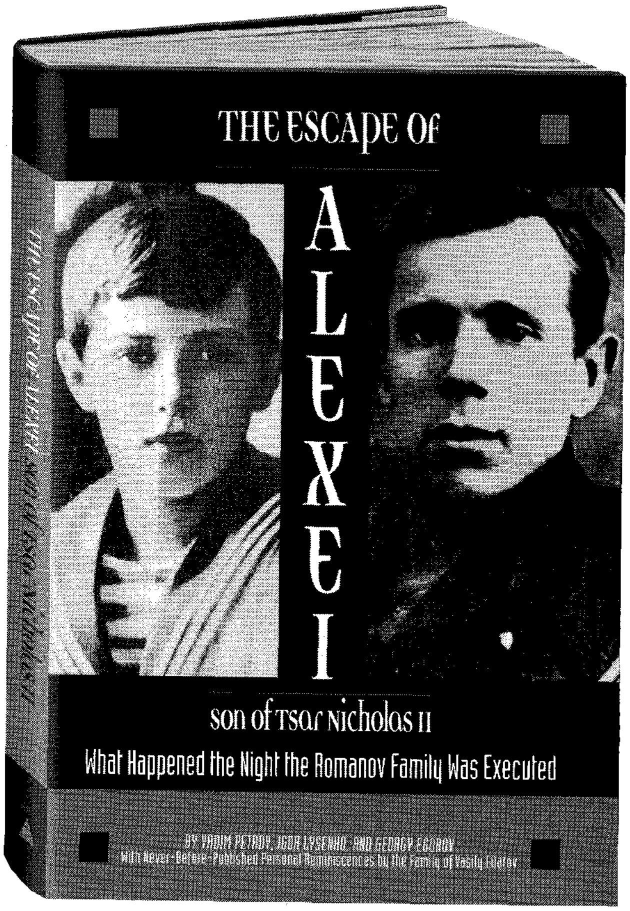
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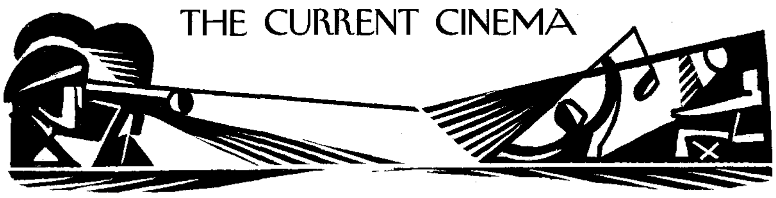


THE CURRENT CINEMA

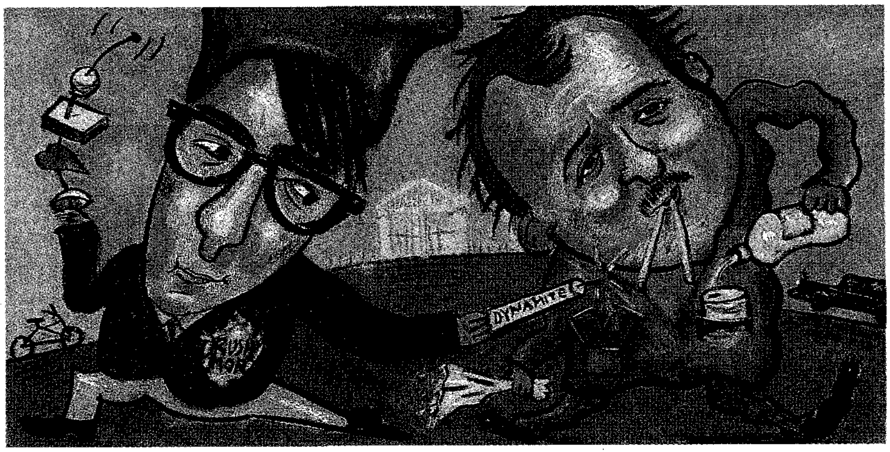
RENAISSANCE TEEN

"Rushmore" celebrates the revenge of the nerd.

BY ANTHONY LANE

DESPITE a diligent search, I have yet to meet anyone who has not enjoyed "Rushmore." Wes Anderson's picture showed in September at the New York Film Festival, where tough-skinned viewers in black polo shirts were severely discomfited to find that they were having a good time. This was highly unorthodox: festival moviegoing is intended to be the cultural equivalent of polar exploration—grim, chilly, bad for the extremities, but just about worth it. Yet here was a film whose vital signs indicated the worrying presence of fun. It was short, smart, strange without being willful, and piled high with non-crusty jokes. The really amazing thing about "Rushmore," however, is that even though it considers the unquenchable (if stubbornly unrequited) need for underage sex, it is produced by Disney.

The age in question is fifteen: junction time, with childhood finally clattering away into the distance. Max Fischer (Jason Schwartzman) is balanced weirdly—though, as far as he is concerned, far from uncomfortably—between the enthusiasms of youth and the rock-strewn responsibilities of the adult world. Like his namesake Bobby, he has more than a touch of the prodigy about him, although what makes Max prodigious is not that he excels at one thing but that he is contagiously moderate at a heap of things. When we first encounter him, Max is in the tenth grade at a pleasant, slightly down-at-heel private school named Rushmore Academy. To say that he attends Rushmore is like saying that the Holy Father hangs out at the Vatican: Rushmore *could* exist without Max, but there would be no point to the place. In a sprightly montage, we learn that he runs the fencing team, the debating team, the calligraphy society, and a host of other groups; he edits the school newspaper and keeps the school bees; above all, he is the leading light of the Max Fischer Players, which were founded by Max Fischer. Guess who writes the plays.



Romantic rivals: A hapless Jason Schwartzman and an antic Bill Murray.

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The sustaining joke of "Rushmore" is that, for a Renaissance man, Max is still stranded deep in the Dark Ages. He has a long, blockish head that's three sizes too big for the body below, with a face as expressive as a shoebox; his thick spectacles are like twin tele-

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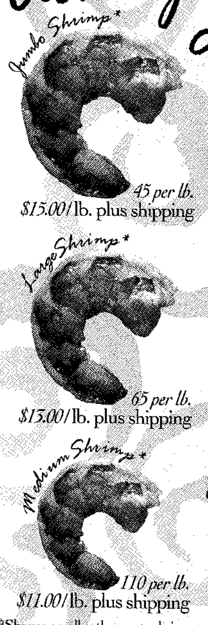

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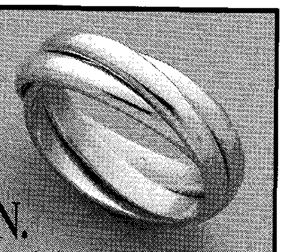

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visions, their hefty black rims nicely echoed by Groucho Marx eyebrows. (As far as I can gather, Max represents a new cinematic species: if he has a precursor, it is the sensible schoolboy in John Duigan's "Flirting"—the one who smoked an empty pipe and packed his best friend off to a sexual tryst with the words "Remember her needs as well as yours.") Max sports a blazer, naturally, with a row of pens clipped to the pocket, and—for that artistic touch—a very unwise red beret. All this should mark him as an ambassador from the Republic of Nerdia, but there is something in Schwartzman's careful and uncowed performance which makes him unexpectedly touching; to look at, Max is pure antihero, but you are charmed to discover, by the end of the film, that the "anti" has dropped off. True, he has been expelled from Rushmore, he has failed to get the girl he loved, and he has spent time in jail; but he is still recognizably Max Fischer, and his proud refusal to countenance the possibility of tragedy has seen him through. It's as if Othello were to put the pillow down, make his apologies, and go off for a drink with the boys.

The Desdemona in Max's life is Miss Cross, who teaches first grade. Played by Olivia Williams, who seems to have recovered splendidly from "The Postman," Miss Cross is a traditional English rose, and she blooms very happily in the mysterious air of "Rushmore." With a typical respect for secrets, the movie peeks politely into her heart but never reveals too much. She is a widow of the non-merry variety, and at some point in the film she acquires a handsome boyfriend; in the meantime, she is courted haplessly by Max, whose idea of romance is to climb through her bedroom window with his forehead covered in fake blood, and more successfully by Max's friend Mr. Blume (Bill Murray). Mr. Blume is the rich, miserably married father of two other Rushmore pupils, and, like Max, he envisages Miss Cross as a courtly ideal to be wooed and won. "What's your first name?" he makes so bold as to ask. "Rosemary," she says. "What's yours?" "Herman."

Now, that is in itself not an amusing line of dialogue, but we're talking Bill

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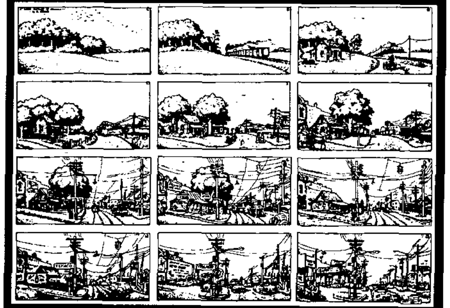

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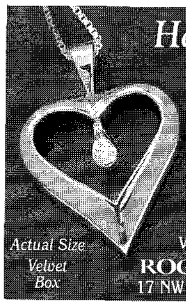

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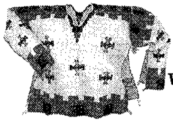

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Murray here, so watch out. Those of us who worship Murray, who take him to be the exploding cigar in the complacent face of Hollywood, have been waiting years, ever since the unadulterated joys of "Groundhog Day," for him to find another film that fits. Herman Blume is only a supporting role, but then so was Harry Lime. You can tell it's a great Murray movie because you find yourself wondering all over again, "How the hell did this guy ever become a star?" That gangling height, those scrunched and pocky features, the limbs that disobey and the hair that wants to retire: How can the same industry employ him and Brad Pitt? There are moments in "Rushmore" when the director must have thrown away his storyboards: a beaten-up Murray with two cigarettes in his mouth, a bored Murray not chipping but *tossing* golf balls into his swimming pool, a girl-shy Murray finishing a conversation and suddenly, for no discernible reason, hurtling away from the camera in one of his mad-puppet runs, no strings attached.

All credit to Wes Anderson, then, and to his co-writer, Owen Wilson, that the picture never veers out of control; they give Bill Murray free rein, but at the same time they delicately curl and bind his character into that of Max, until you can hardly imagine man and boy apart. "I'm in love with her," Blume says of Miss Cross; "I was in love with her first," protests Max. He is like an eight-year-old going on fifty, and Blume is the other way round; they arrive at the principle of deadpan from opposite directions. Bill Murray's glazed expression sees no cause for hope in the world, whereas Jason Schwartzman's level, myopic gaze sees nothing else. The two creeds collide beautifully at the barbershop: Max, ashamed of his origins amid his wealthy classmates, has always pretended that his father is a neurosurgeon, and it is not until late in the film that Blume learns otherwise. Max introduces him to the barber—"My father," he says. If you want to pick one shot from this year's movies, try the look on Bill Murray's face as he shakes hands with Fischer senior: puzzlement, disbelief, a speck of outrage, the quiet rush of truth, and, last of all, a gentle settling of kindness. The entire thing takes maybe four seconds: this is known as acting.

"Rushmore" is not without flaws. The scene where Max gets drunk and abusive at dinner seems too exotic for his tidy tastes, and I caught a definite slackness in the third quarter: the film is so indebted to Max's moods that, when his fortunes slump, everything else follows suit. For the most part, however, "Rushmore" is a model of economy; as if to rebuff the slacker generation, it goes about its appointed tasks with Max-like vigor and aplomb. Still, why should so small and parochial a comedy exert such a pull? Maybe it has to do with the two-tone color of the project: Anderson has made an up movie on a down theme. In truth, Blume is a dead soul and, at fifteen, Max is close to the verge of failure—he even lives next to a graveyard. But the two of them kick out like true Americans, and the whole movie jumps with the buzz that you hear in the songs on the soundtrack. Best of all, there are the Max Fischer Players, who studiously mount the most elaborate school productions ever witnessed. Max's version of "Serpico" looked pretty good, but his Vietnam play, complete with real dynamite, looked even better. As he stood there onstage in full "Deer Hunter" makeup, blazing away with a flamethrower, I thought, This kid is something else. He should be in pictures. ♦

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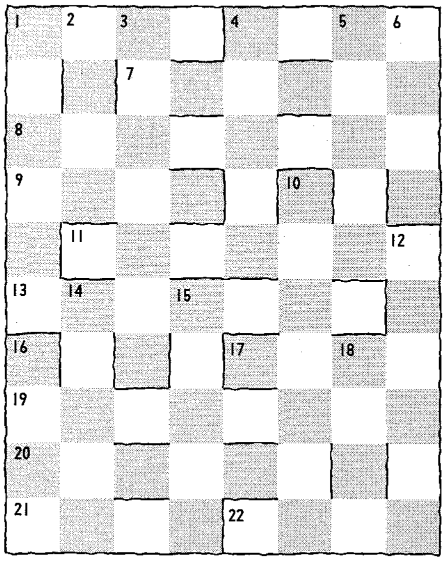

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4 Republicans turned against old Kelly creation (4)
7 Caricature is done for inventor (6)
8 Sly pair of strips, completely united (8)
9 Note no-good foe of Flash Gordon (4)
11 Dessert with a crust splattered Dagwood's face (7)
13 Garfield, for one, with guerrilla's traps (7)
17 For starters, Oliphant was Englishman, not Welshman (4)
19 Dilbert's funny bits (8)
20 Ultimately, Calvin loves spinning stories (6)
21 Annie's original hitch dazzled (4)
22 Brenda's unfinished headline (4)

DOWN

1 Spacy cartoon about society (6)
2 "BC" character I opposed (4)
3 Strip upset an alien (7)
4 Conduct of Id's leader in conspiracy (5)
5 Run Stimpy's pal over in "Dead Duck" (5)
6 Individuals in "Doonesbury" (4)
10 Groening mostly pens sheep for actress (3,4)
12 Dennis's first sneer: dumb and dumber (6)
14 Couple from "Archie" fight with weapon (5)
15 Baby bear editor magnified greatly (5)
16 Millay somewhat irritated Nast (4)
18 Something for kitty turned up in "Hot Spot" (4)

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The solution to puzzle No. 68 appears on page 206. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

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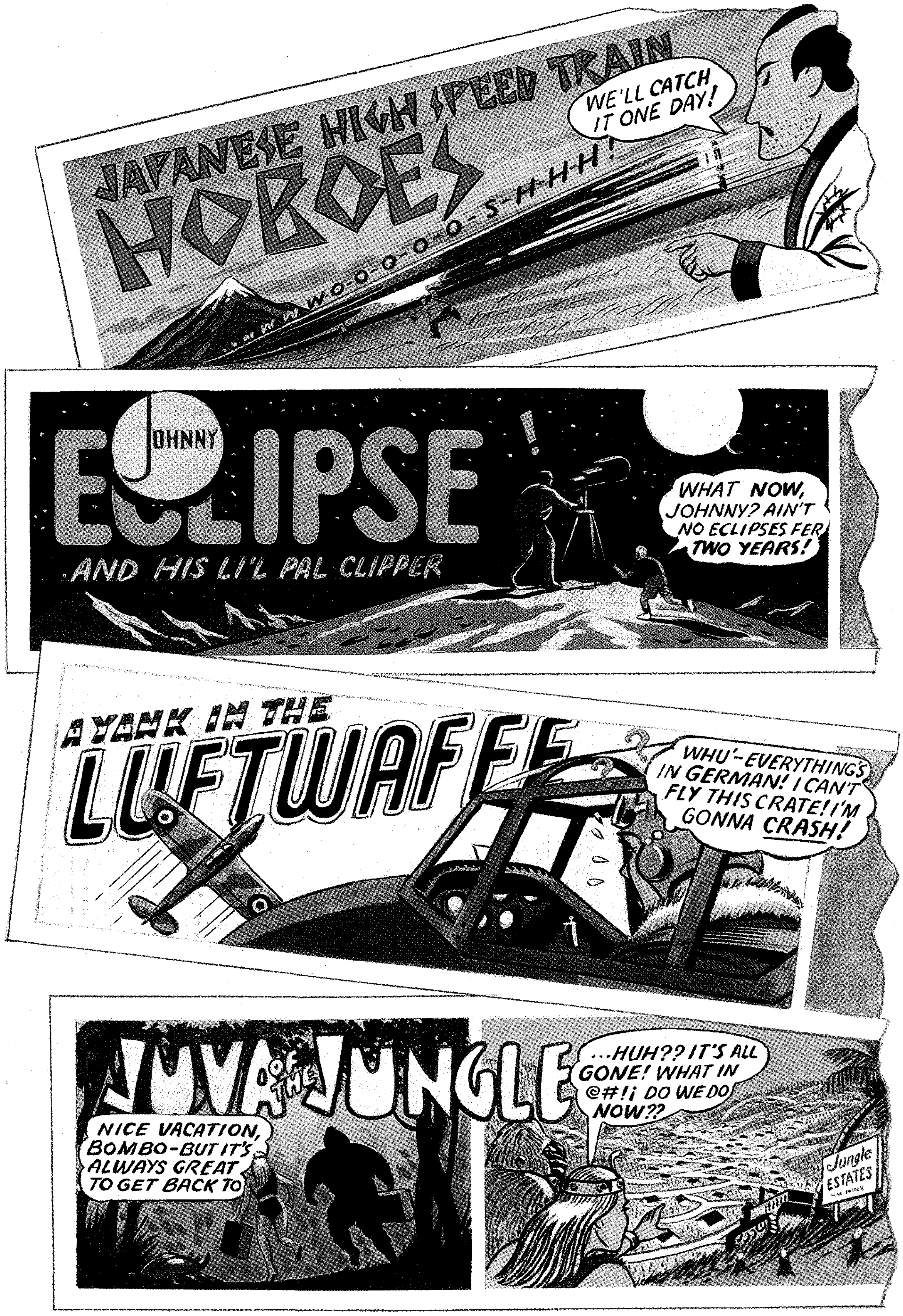
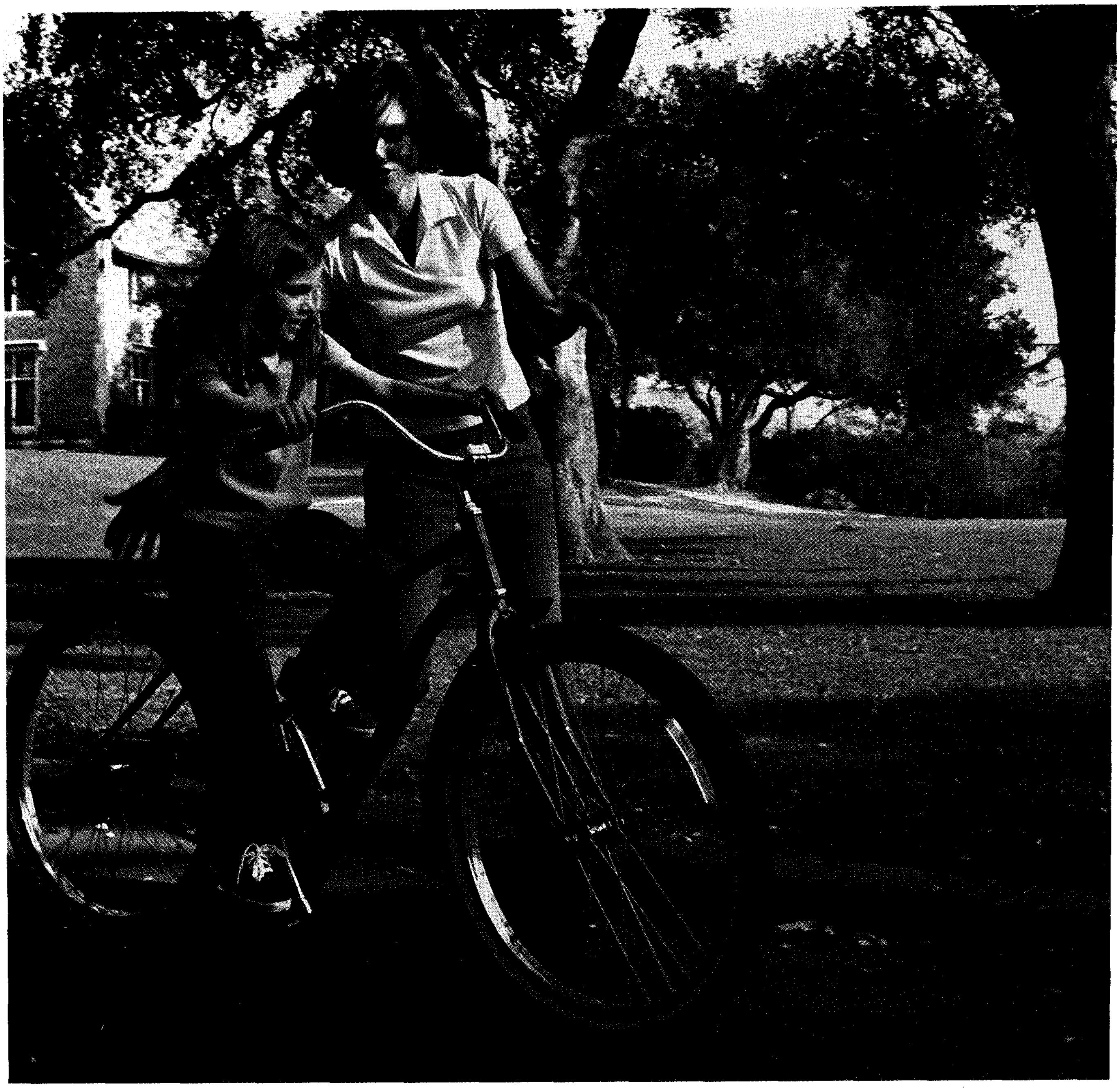
THE WORLD'S SHORTEST-LIVED COMIC STRIPS


JAPANESE HIGH SPEED TRAIN
HOBOES
WE'LL CATCH IT ONE DAY!
W-W-W-W-W-O-O-O-O-O-O-S-H-H-H-H!
JOHNNY ECLIPSE
AND HIS LI'L PAL CLIPPER
!
WHAT NOW, JOHNNY? AIN'T NO ECLIPSES FER TWO YEARS!
A YANK IN THE LUFTWAFFE
?
WHU'-EVERYTHING'S IN GERMAN! I CAN'T FLY THIS CRATE! I'M GONNA CRASH!
JUVA OF THE JUNGLE
NICE VACATION, BOMBO-BUT IT'S ALWAYS GREAT TO GET BACK TO
...HUH?? IT'S ALL GONE! WHAT IN @#!¡ DO WE DO NOW??
Jungle ESTATES



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